

TURNER

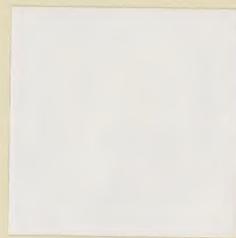
BY

SIR WALTER ARMSTRONG

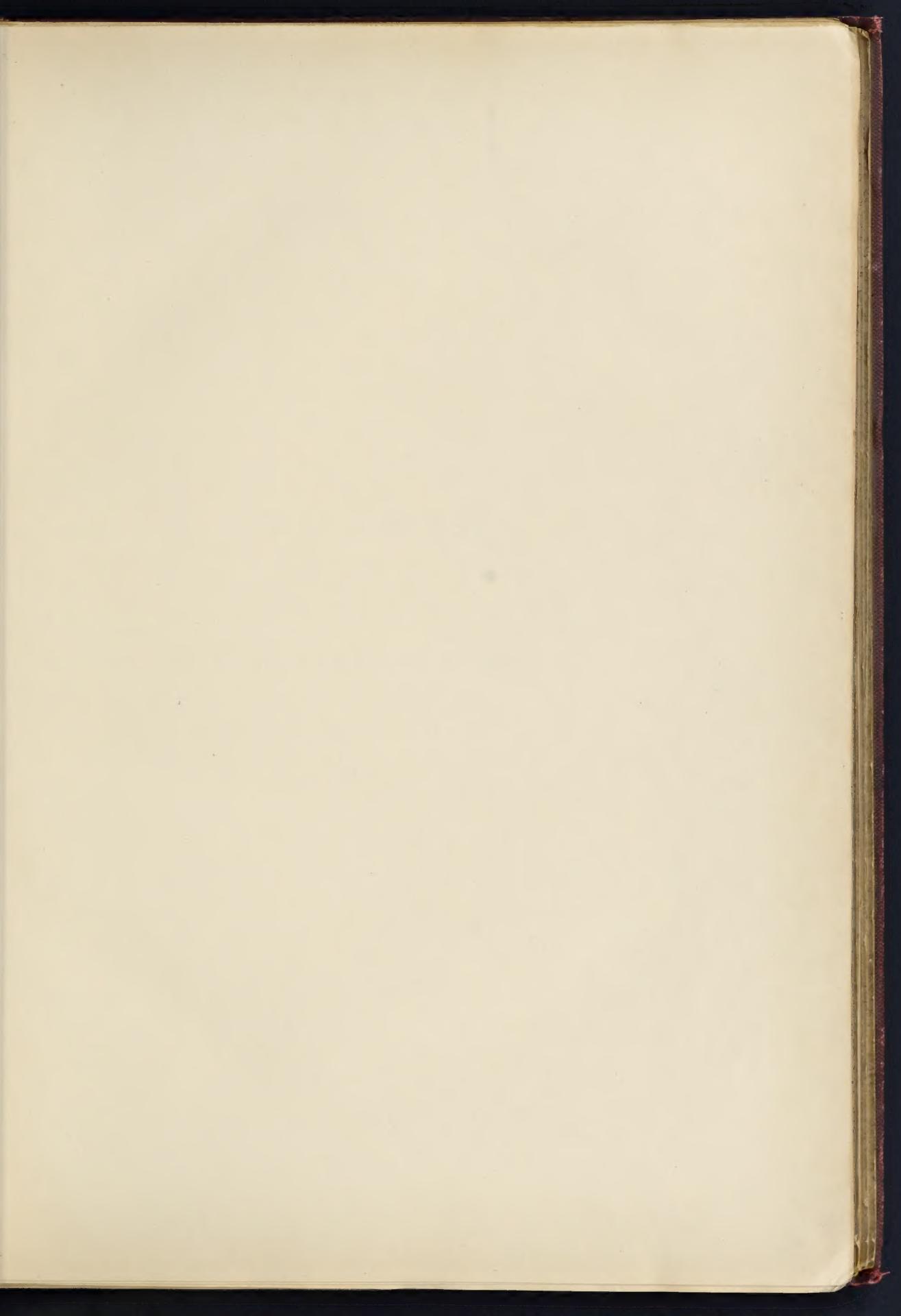
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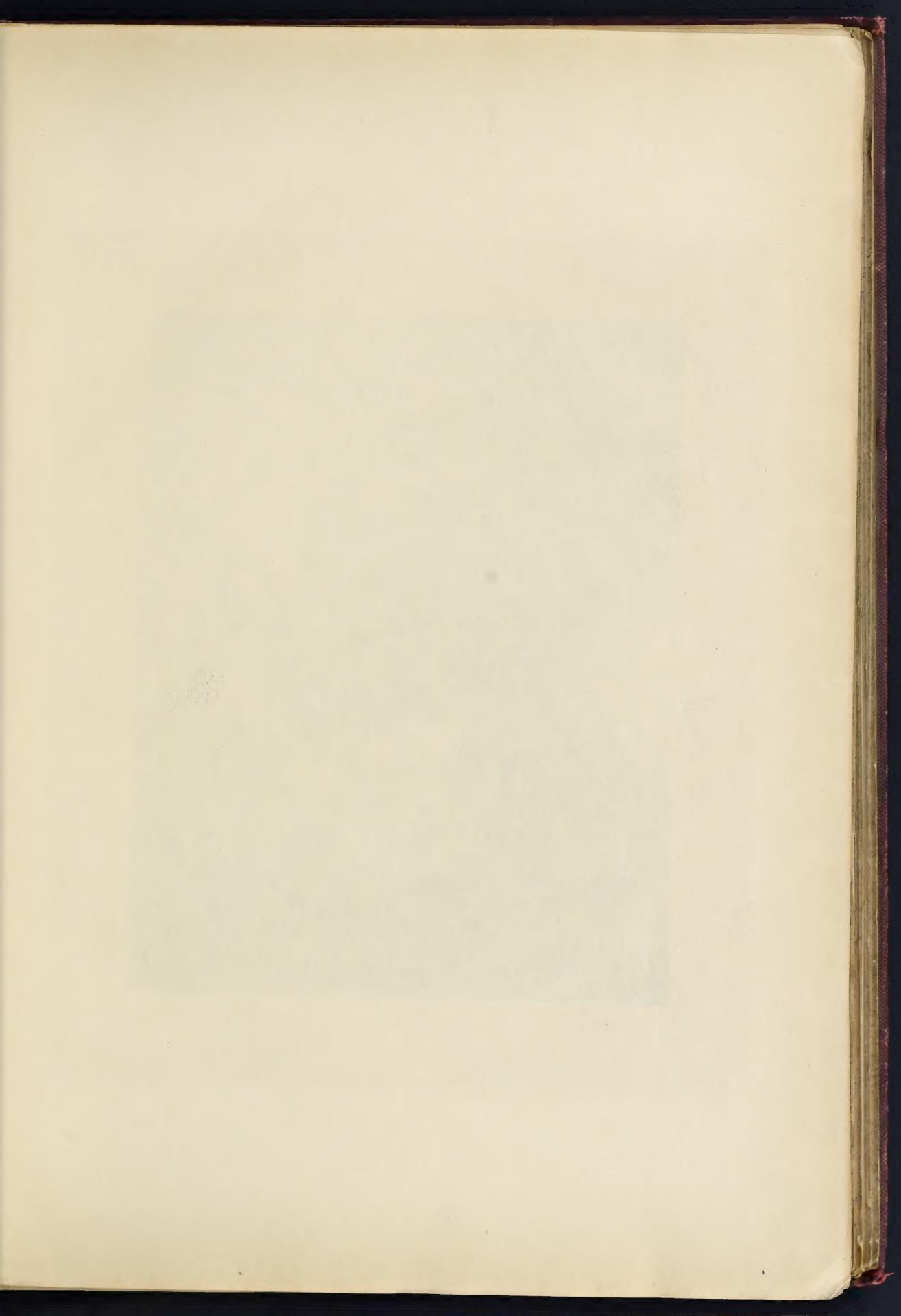
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TURNER

BY

SIR WALTER ARMSTRONG



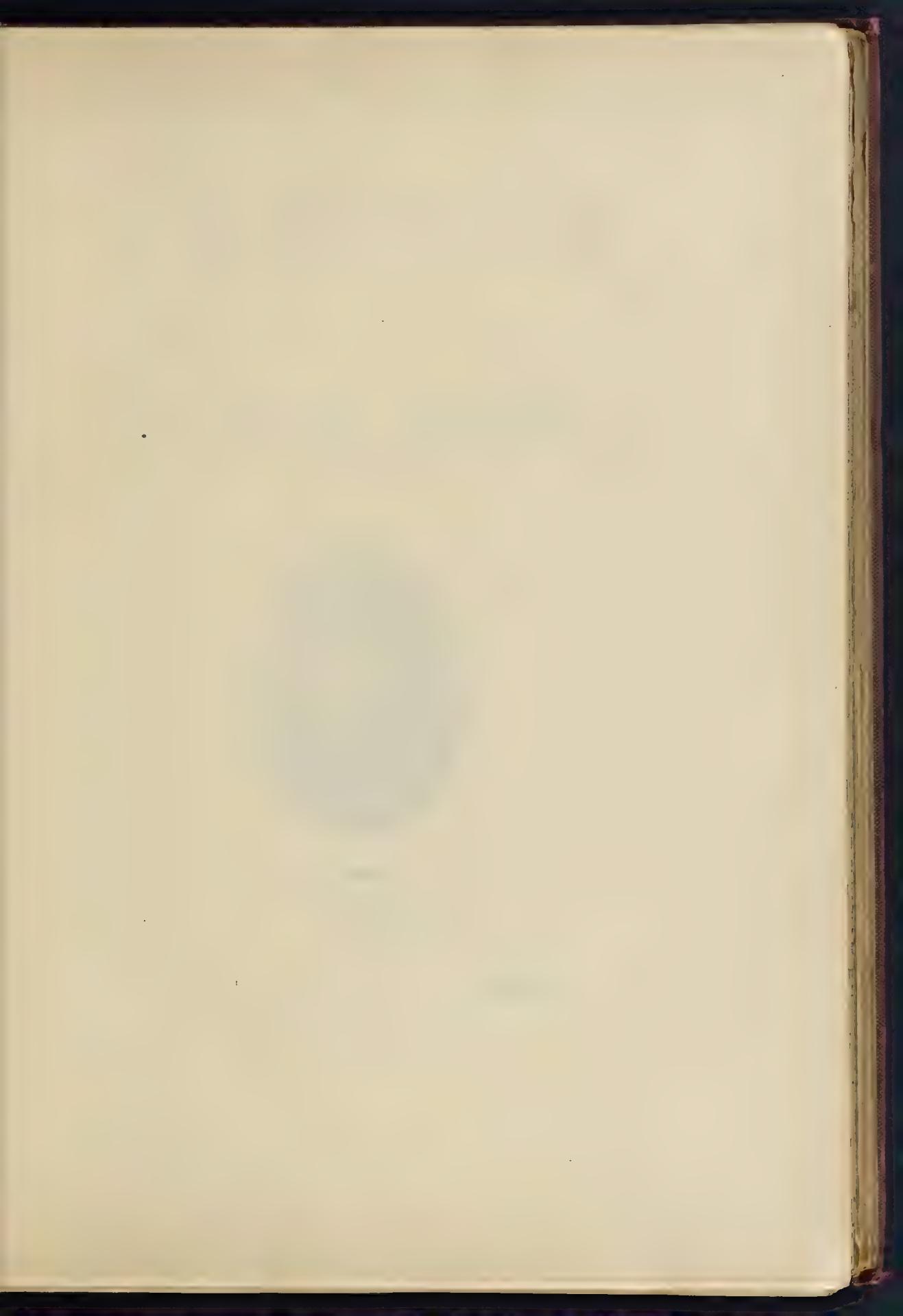


ADONIS DEPARTING FOR THE CHASE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

59 x 47

In the Collection of
SIR WM. CUTHBERT QUILTER, Bart., M.P.



J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

From the Sketch in Water-Colours by J. LINNELL.

(Same size as Original.)

In the Collection of
JAMES ORROCK, Esq.

TURNER

BY

SIR WALTER ARMSTRONG

DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND



1902

THOS. AGNEW & SONS

LONDON, MANCHESTER, AND LIVERPOOL

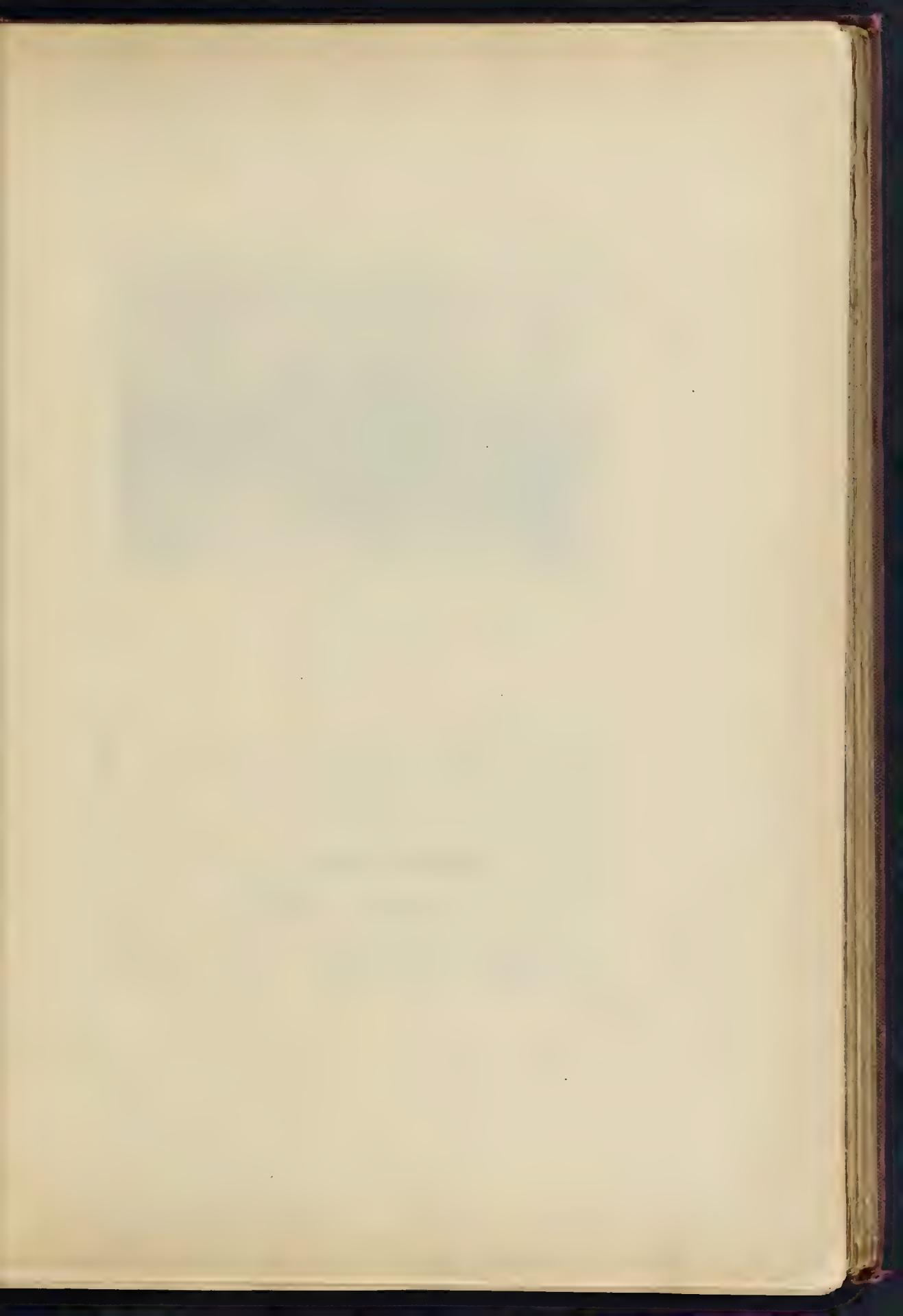
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

NEW YORK

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COCKERMOUTH CASTLE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(23½ x 35)

In the Collection of
LORD LECONFIELD, PETWORTH.



PREFACE.

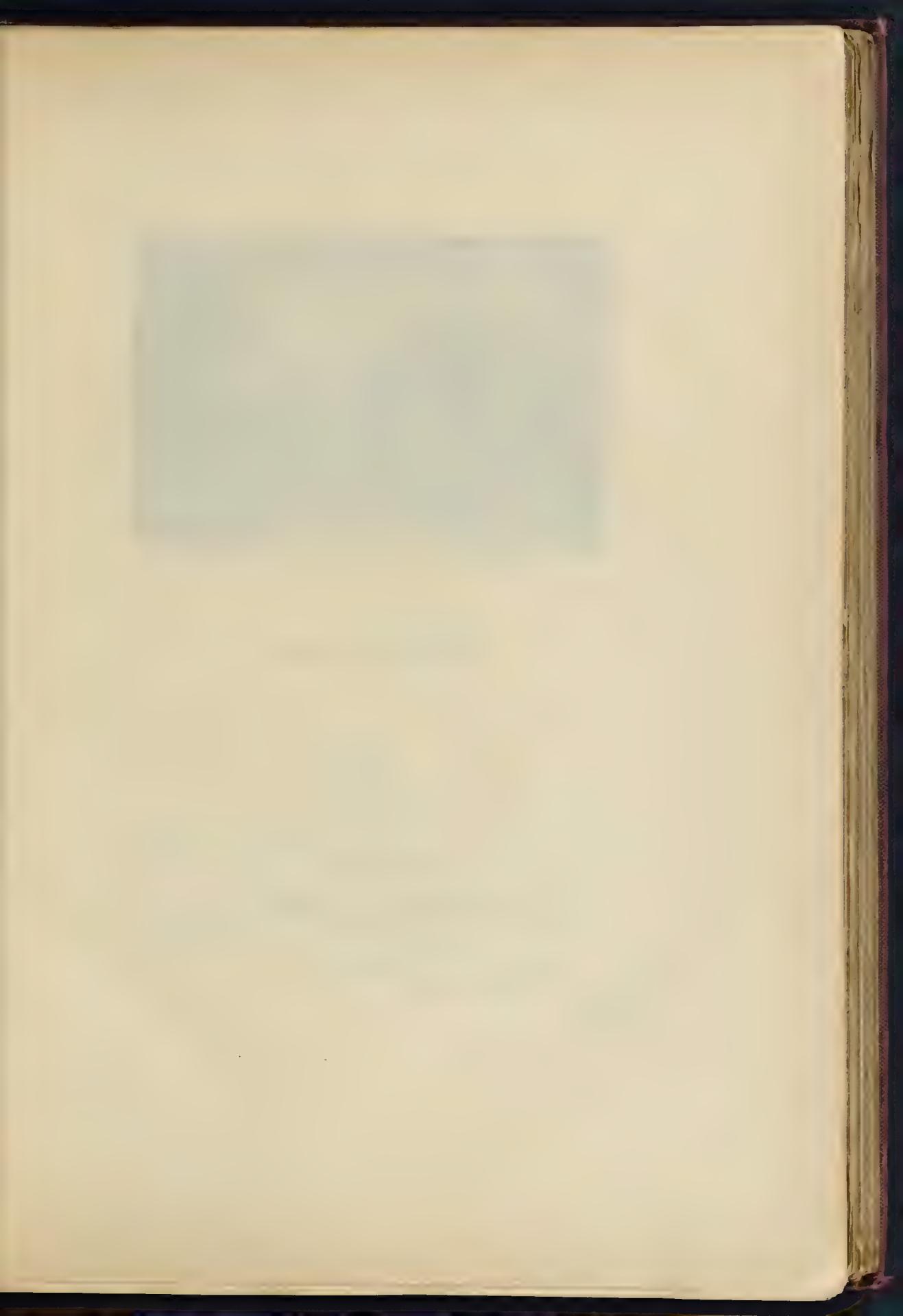
IN the following chapters an attempt has been made to present Turner to the reader with as much completeness as the conditions would allow. An exhaustive biography is no longer—has, perhaps, never been—possible. During the painter's own lifetime his most intimate friends found it difficult to satisfy their legitimate curiosity; while too many of those with whom his more retired hours were spent belonged to the classes which disappear and leave no trace. But although we cannot know Turner as we do Johnson, we can at least build up an image of him, both as man and artist, which shall be consistent with the undoubted facts, as well as with the memories of those few people yet living who knew

PREFACE

him in the flesh. An image, too, which shall be consistent with itself; for, if I may be pardoned for saying so, too many of the pictures which have been made of Turner since his death, have no such congruity. They too often make use of superlatives which war both with circumstance and with each other, and leave us to struggle with a consequently blurred impression. Turner's character was complex, but not, I think, obscure, and although it is difficult to follow his thoughts into their byways and impossible to chronicle more than a very small percentage of his doings, it should be comparatively easy, with the help of his letters, of his less discreet acquaintance, of his art, and of his own poetical confessions, to make a portrait in words which his painted portraits will corroborate. This I have tried to do. Whether any degree of success has been reached or not, the reader must decide.

W. A.

The warmest thanks of both the author and the publisher are due to the owners of Turner's pictures for the facilities of examination and reproduction they have afforded. In no case have these been denied, with the result that the plates here given illustrate the great artist with unprecedented completeness. In the production of these plates, and, indeed, of the whole book, the knowledge and experience of Mr. D. Croal Thomson has been of the greatest value.



ETON COLLEGE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(23½ x 35½)

In the Collection of
LORD LECONFIELD, PETWORTH.



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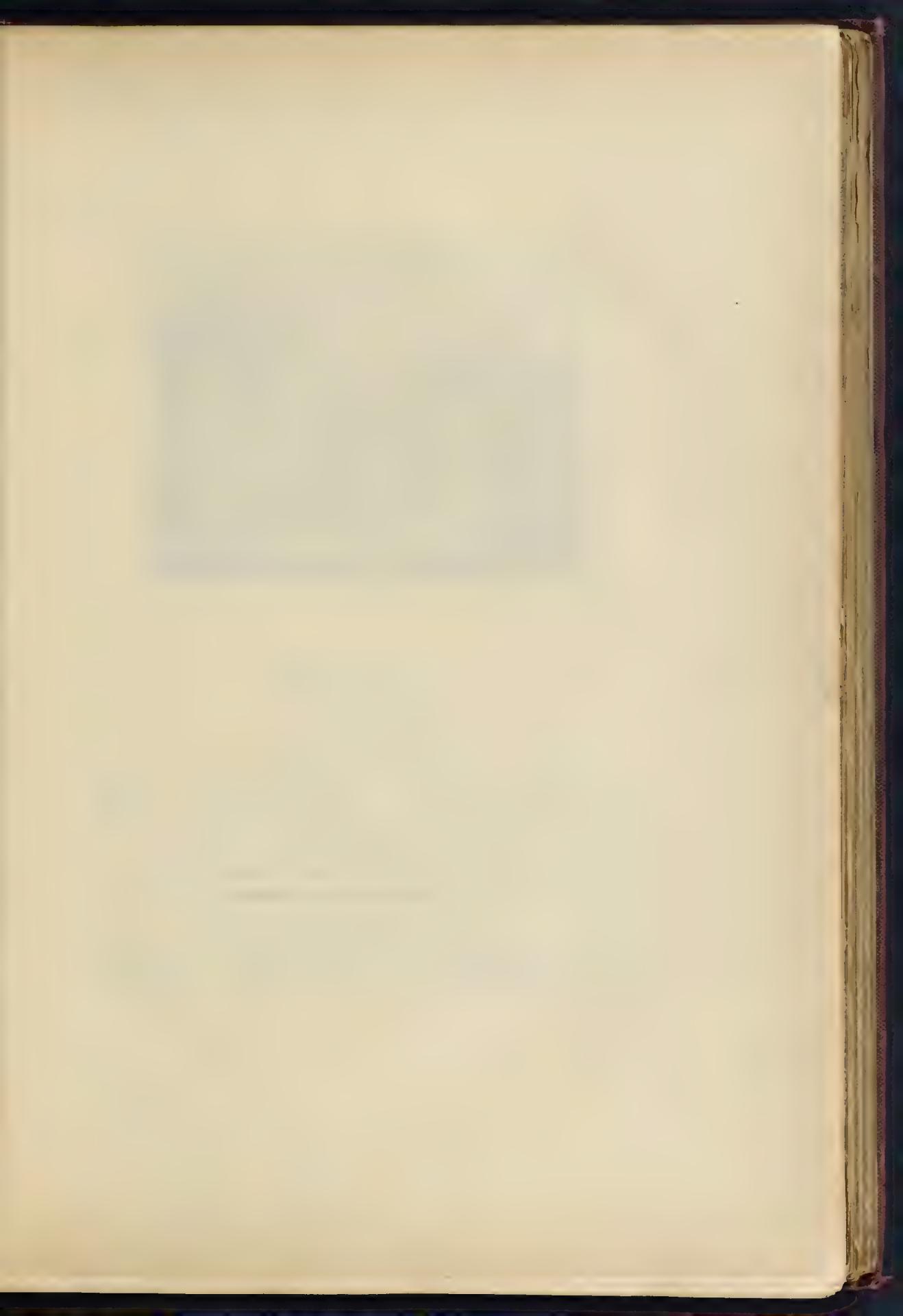
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LICHFIELD.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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C. FAIRFAX MURRAY, Esq.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

EVERY human being is a battle-ground for two opposing forces—one arising from accidental conditions, the other developed from within. In the case of an artist the dividing-line may be drawn with some assurance, for it is not difficult to trace the æsthetic thread among the other strands which compose the individual. More especially does this appear to be true of those artists who, like Turner, are absorbent, descriptive, and explanatory rather than creative. In later chapters I shall have to attempt an analysis of Turner's purely artistic gifts. Meanwhile it may be useful to devote some introductory pages to a consideration of certain external influences—external at

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least to the æsthetic part of his individuality—which never ceased to modify his work down to the end. The first, if not the greatest, of these influences was the scene upon which his eyes first opened in this world.

London, the Eternal City of the English-speaking races, has seldom received its due share of admiration. Its own citizens, no less than the strangers for whom it has now at last begun to bestir itself, have been alive to the frequent meanness of its units and to the absence of signs that its people as a whole attach importance to the look of things. And yet from two points of view it has scarcely a rival. It is intensely human and inexhaustibly picturesque. Putting aside a few unmeaning districts where speculation has been more insolent than usual, it is alive with human passion to a degree unapproached by any other great European city. Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Madrid—all these seem built to order. London, like the little Italian capitals, is obviously the handiwork of the men who live in it. Its qualities and defects are those of the people who swarm in its streets, and we feel that to trace the reasons for its being what it is, is to analyse the national character. In many of its most conspicuous features the French capital runs counter to the French grain. In matters of ordinary life, for instance, the French are only less conservative than the Chinese. They cling to a good thing when they have it, and are not apt to be taken by novelty for novelty's sake.*

And yet Paris of the second Empire and third Republic is essentially experimental, and represents the substitution of a central, detached

* We are so accustomed to tar the whole French character out of the political tarpot that the unchangeableness of French life in its practical aspects too often escapes our notice. Paris may fairly be called the centre of French vacillation; and yet who can remember any real change in Paris? Electricity has put new ways of doing old things into the hands of its people, but it is still the old things that are done. There is none of that passion for variety, novelty, and what we call originality with which purveyors for the English people have to reckon. Continuity is no less characteristic of French life as the people live it than its opposite is of Parliamentary politics as understood in the Palais Bourbon.

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authority for the individual, with his own wants and predilections. Similar but always very partial substitutions have taken place now and then in London, and at present there appears to be some danger of their spreading beyond their usual limits, but on the whole the desires of individual Londoners have found expression, century after century, in the constitution of their home. This of course has its drawbacks as well as its advantages. It makes for ugliness and a good deal of practical inconvenience. On the other hand, it leads to some sporadic sublimity, and it makes a town intensely human. It fills its veins with warm blood, and renders possible a sympathy between itself and the fortunes of those it shelters which is out of the question with a city built and provided. London is an ant-hill; Paris and its Continental rivals are patent bee-hives. To walk, on a fine May morning, from the Arc de l'Étoile, down the Champs Élysées, over the site of the Tuileries, through the quadrangle of the Louvre, and arrive in front of St. Germain l'Auxerrois in time to hear noon booming from its historic *bourdon*, is to receive, perhaps, the most vivid impression the art of arrangement has yet prepared in this world. So far as we can tell, the concentration of power has never before wedded beauty to unity over so wide a space. By the time we reach the end of such a pilgrimage we feel intoxicated with the completeness of our physical enjoyment; and yet we have to make a conscious, nay, an irksome effort to realise the connection between all this splendour and the human life which swarms about it. The scheme followed is too external, too mathematical, too objective, too clean-swept of those inevitable accidents which attend free expression, to strike one as the genuine outcome of human nature.

Before we can realise that this is indeed the Paris of history, that from a tower of the beautiful church behind us the “tocsin de Paris” cried “Now!” to the butchers of the St. Bartholomew; that in the corner over there stood the house of Coligny; that

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from a window beyond Perrault's too famous colonnade a King of France shot Huguenots like bolted rabbits ; that over kennels now covered by the wide asphalte of the Rue du Louvre lurched the royal coach as Ravaillac made his tiger-spring on its wheel and drove his knife between the ribs of Henri Quatre ; that in the neighbouring Rue de l'Échelle, now so blatant in its clean-swept width, Fersen hid away the *berline* which was to carry Louis XVI. to Varennes ; that from those few tall, stooping houses which are still left the people watched the most tragic figure of history pass to her waiting grave ; that into the narrow, swarming streets which used to cluster round this same Louvre the guns of the little Corsican artilleryman crushed back the Sections on the birthday of his career—before we can realise such scenes as these we have not only to reconstitute a city ; we have either to imagine one born on different lines altogether, or to suppose that the French capital has always been a mask rather than a figure-head for French history.

It is different with London. London and Londoner connote the same ideas. Each pursues its own way, and trusts to the give-and-take of life, to the shaking-down of one thing with another, like stones in a cart, for eventual solidarity. The city breathes the same spirit as its people. It seems alive with the English genius, with English energy and self-confidence, with English humour and toleration, with that peculiar English perversity which combines knowledge of the right way with a determination to make the wrong one lead to the goal. The range of its effects, from the brilliancy of Piccadilly on a May morning to the apocalyptic gloom of a winter sunset over the wharves and bridges of the Thames ; from the rush of the great thoroughfares to the sleepy repose of the by-ways which lie beside them, like drowsy fields beside a tumultuous mountain stream ; from the intensely human dulness of its mean streets to the imperial grandeur of its apex at St. Paul's, make it everlastingly new, unexpected, and expressive,

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like a clever woman. Even its unreasonable contrasts of wealth and poverty, of daintiness and dirt, of power and servility, help to make it an epitome, or rather an encyclopædia, of the propensities and potentialities of the race to which it owes its being.

The most characteristic walk we can take in modern Paris is that from l'Étoile to the Place du Louvre. A corresponding voyage in London would be from Whitehall to Bow Church. In the first case we learn little of any side but one of the French character. In the second, between King Charles's statue and the Duke of Wellington's—the one “looking up the Poultry”—the observant man would gather almost as much of the British idiosyncrasy as if he read the history of all the years which intervened between the setting up of those two figures. The trace of the street itself would tell him much, and what it told would be confirmed by the shapes, substances, and sizes of the buildings ranked along it. Here he would divine a sacrifice, too often abortive, to beauty; there, another, perhaps brutal, to use. Of beauty itself he would find no lack. Indeed there are few places where, within a mile, more good architecture can be seen than between Wellington Street and the eastern end of Cheapside. Somerset House, St. Mary le Strand, the tower of St. Clement Danes, the memory—not the memorial!—of Temple Bar, the spire of St. Bride's, the silhouette of St. Martin's against the unrivalled front of St. Paul's, and the great steeple of Bow Church, all threaded on this one highway, make up a series of stone poems not easily to be rivalled. But in spite of these fine surprises his feelings would not be chiefly moved by the architecture. The master impression would be left by the essential humanity of the pageant as a whole, by the witness borne at every turn to that energetic and yet reasonably just prosecution of individual aims and desires which is the birth-mark of the Anglo-Saxon. The very grime and sweat of the city seem a mortar to hold its stones and people together. The defects and virtues of the one are those of the other,

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and from the union of the two rises a flame of human passion at which the dullest fancy may kindle.

The picturesqueness of London, its aptitude to the painter's use, depends upon this congruity between its external features and the lives lived among them. Where individuality rules the units, possibilities of infinite variation are offered by the whole. If modern painters were like seventeenth-century Dutchmen, and were content to pass their lives in exploiting some one narrow field, the Strand, Fleet Street, and Ludgate Hill would supply themes for a whole career, and that with less repetition than we find in the work of a Cuyp or a De Hooch. The draughtsman, the colourist, or the chiaroscuroist would exhaust his powers long before he reached the end of his material. Even Venice is comparatively poor, for it has neither the wealth of contrast in mass and line nor the never-ending opportunities which lie in the waywardness of the English climate. And yet London is still awaiting her Canaletto. It is strange that no painter has accepted her for his fate, for his single spouse, and set himself to weld her moods into that painted epic of a great city which the fancy can so easily foresee. The few who have done something of the kind have been too narrow in their sympathies, too lacking in the catholicity which makes for epic grandeur. They have seen little in London but fog and steeples.

And yet where in the world can you find a scene more superbly pictorial, more essentially picturesque, than one of the great centres of London activity on a blazing day in summer? Take the famous view up Ludgate Hill, when the sunlight pouring in from the south plays over the artificial valley and turns the roaring traffic into a torrent of scintillating colour, as if the great church at the top were a magic fountain, transforming men, women, and gaudy vehicles, and pouring them down the hillside in a never-ending stream of living gems. Everything here is picturesque, even the vulgar bridge

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with its semaphores and steaming locomotives ; and the painter who paints because he likes to paint could ask for no finer subject. London, in short, is as fit a school for the imaginative artist as any spot on earth. It offers an immense variety of images in a stimulating form. Nothing is too final, too complete as it stands. Everything is open to a new use, to the expression of individual ways of thinking and seeing. The painter is never met by the *non possum* of the balanced and finished work of art. He is not curbed to simple admiration, but is allowed, or rather compelled, to select and combine for himself ; the necessary—oscillation, shall I call it ?—between his own personality and the object is made easy and the channel to a new creation left generously open. In short, if there be any essential connection between an artist's achievement and the impressions of his childhood, a future painter could not choose a better place to be born in than the City on the Thames.

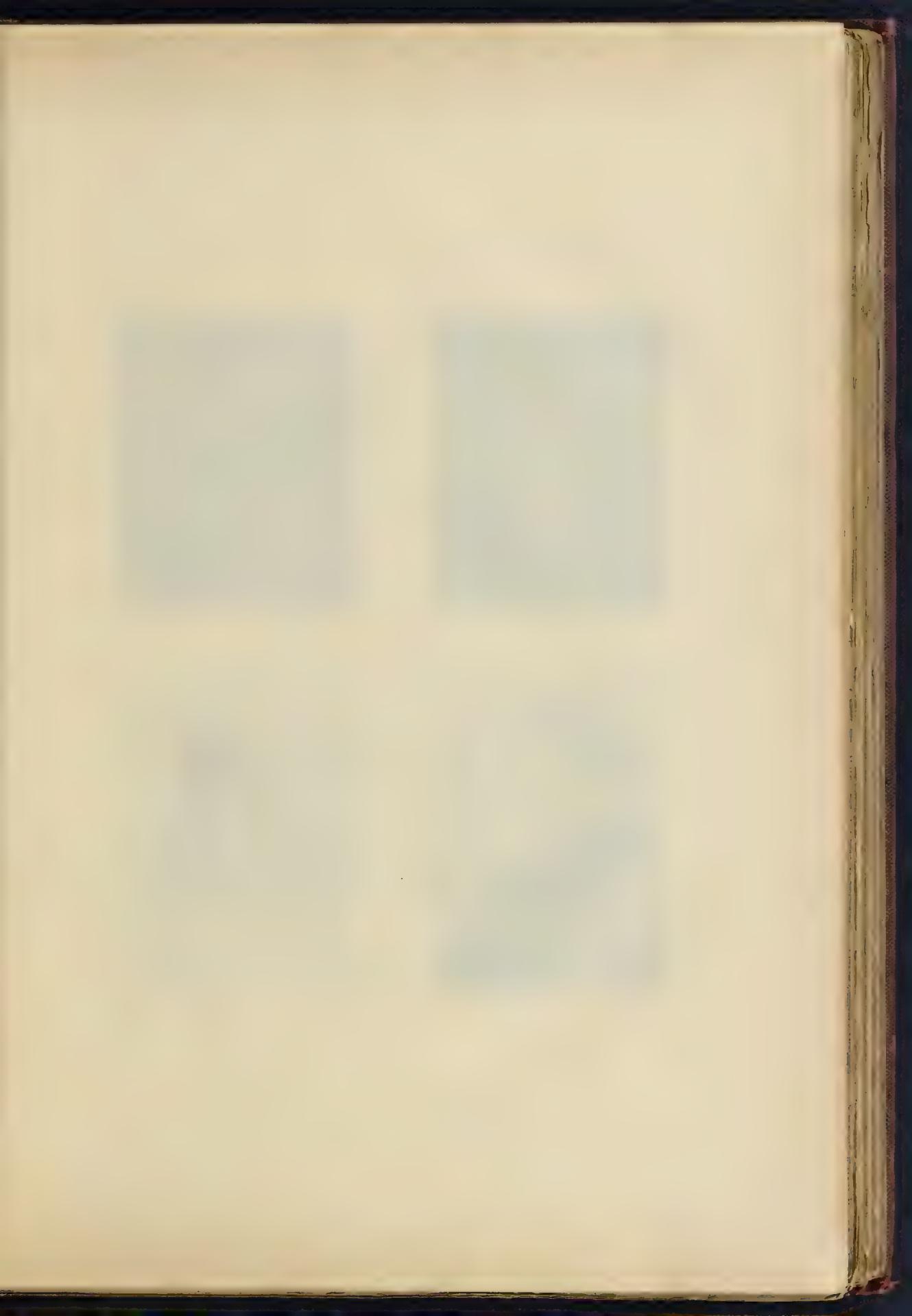
The greatest artists of all, those who cannot think without creating, and only live to pour out their own abundance for the benefit of less gifted souls, are, no doubt, independent of impressions. They use such material as they find at hand ; but it remains strictly material, and its artistic value lies entirely in the bits of a great personality for which it affords a vehicle. We do not admire Michelangelo for his way of seeing things, but for what he creates out of what he does see. The non-essential features of his art—its data—were no doubt mainly determined by the fact that he was born in Tuscany in the latter half of the fifteenth century. But if he had been born in London a week ago, and were to enjoy here the encouragement he received from Julius II., our children would find him working in the same creative spirit for an English Ministry as he did for a Roman Pope.

At least that is my belief ; and the same thing may be said of some half-a-dozen more of the most resounding names in art. But

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immediately below these men, who were essentially creators, come a certain number of others who were more dependent on conditions external to themselves. The word "illustrator" has been so inconveniently specialised that one feels a certain diffidence in applying it to a great artist at all. As now used, it seems to mean one who explains or supplements the work of other men. But why should we not extend its scope, and make it include those who explain Nature and interpret her beauties to people less clear-sighted than themselves? With this extension the terms "illustrator" and "illustration" might fairly be applied to many men and to many kinds of art to which in their narrower significance they would scarcely be appropriate. The dividing-line between the illustrator and the creator is, no doubt, difficult to draw. It is not enough to say that the one explains nature while the other uses nature to explain himself. The distinction lies rather in quantity than in kind, for just as the creator cannot help explaining the natural forms he uses, so the illustrator cannot avoid putting himself into his explanations. And yet the difficulty is more apparent than real. All those who understand works of art can see whether an artist is working with his eye and mind on the object, like Kipling, or with his eye feeding a mind preoccupied with the quality of its own output, like Stevenson. The difference is one of preponderance; but, assuming good will, it is easy to see which side of the scale outweighs the other.

The most creative creators in the plastic arts have, I suppose, been Michelangelo and Rembrandt. In their cases *milieu* did not lead expression, although it determined the materials of which expression made use. Rembrandt was a consummate chiaroscuroist, not because he was born in a mill with many shadows and a microscopic window, but because the direction of his æsthetic impulse was towards concentration, towards that final artistic unity which is to man what



FOUR PORTRAITS OF J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

In the Collection of

1. WM. WARD, Esq.
2. THE NATIONAL GALLERY.
3. WM. WARD, Esq.
4. W. G. RAWLINSON, Esq.



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organic unity is to nature.* It is by their force in unity that his pictures live, and we may be sure that, no matter where he was born, his *art* would have developed on the lines it actually followed. And so with Michelangelo. His creative energy found an outlet through its combination with an unrivalled sense of how to express power—physical, spiritual, and intellectual. In writing thus I am alive to the fact that I lay myself open to misconstruction, and that unless a more logical definition of the term “art” than most of us are satisfied with be accepted, the distinction I am pointing to will not be perceived. It is, as I have said, one of preponderance, or rather of priority. The one class of workers has subjective visions and then seeks objective means for their realisation; the other and, as I think, the lower class reverses the process; it receives objective impressions and then proceeds to clothe those impressions in a subjective envelope. If the two methods led to similar results it would be waste of time to argue about them; but they do not. In the sequel this question will have to be examined at some length, for it has a direct bearing on the future of Turner’s reputation. At present it is enough to point out that early experiences are more important to those painters whom I have ventured to call illustrators—associating the term with a redeeming definition—than to those who use external facts primarily as vehicles for the distribution of subjective ideas.

Turner has often been pitied for his birth in Maiden Lane and his boyhood on the pavements of the Strand. And yet we may doubt whether he could have had a better preparation for the work which lay before him. Looking back over his career, it is impossible to deny that the large humanity of London and its mysterious envelope gave a tint to his imagination which suited it exactly and which it never lost.

* Just as the production of man himself seems to be the supreme feat of our earth, so does the production of final and organic unity in a work of art seem the supreme feat of man—that is, it affords the best proof both of the individual efficiency of his faculties and of their co-ordination.

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After the early years of drudgery were over, years in which he slowly grew to understand his *métier* and passed from the dull stage of saying what he could to the glorious one of saying what he would, he settled down to clothing his ever-expanding world in the particular form of beauty to which his native city had given him the key. Now and then, for special purposes, he put aside mystery for pattern, and was content to set things in an absolutely transparent ether. But when he worked without an after-thought he made atmospheric mystery the chief ingredient of his art, and veiled the most crystalline sites in Europe in a gauze for which the warp came from his own birthplace on the Thames. As an artist, in short, as a selector of æsthetic justifications for reproducing facts, he remained all his life a child of London. He lingered before Titian, Claude, the two Poussins, Wilson, Cuyp, and many more, and grudged fame to each in turn. But when he entered the lists against them, it was with a weapon they did not know. It was with that sense of nature's infinity, of life's mystery, of the transforming power of many mixed sincerities, which our abnormal cosmopolis was so well able to inspire.

Turner's originality was never radical. All through his youth and his early maturity he was producing things which would scarcely have been what they were had someone else not lived and worked before him. Many comparatively unimportant artists have shown more power to invent, to build upon a foundation of their own. He began by producing enriched echoes of the English draughtsmen. He went on to treat the famous masters of landscape in the same way, showing a curious want of perspective as he did it, and being apparently as well pleased with a victory over Salvator or Loutherbourg as with one over Claude or Wilson. From first to last he required a text, a motive gathered more or less outside himself. It will be part of my task to show how this peculiarity affected his work, and now does something to modify his fame. At present I only wish to note the support it gives

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to my theory of the influence of London. The town itself he painted curiously seldom, but its soul, the strange, formless, half-human, wholly living force exerted by the monstrous city, coloured his life, and became at the end, when he had put aside and forgotten his pathetic *anch'io sono pittore* forms of rivalry, the ideal vision by the light of which he worked.

The second condition which had a profound effect on Turner's art was his family history. For some unknown reason he betrayed extreme irritation when any one approached this thorny question. Gossiping traditions have professed to account for his touchiness, but no cause for it is really known beyond his mother's occasional insanity and the fact that, even in her lucid intervals, she seems to have been kept more or less *en cachette*. However this may have been, the painter was as a matter of fact intensely secretive in all that concerned his domestic affairs. After his mother's death, when he had houses of his own and his father had become his factotum, he seldom alluded to his childish experiences. Turner senior was more garrulous; but when his professional loquacity was upon him he talked with one eye on the door, in fear of his formidable son. The result of all this withdrawal was a want of proportion in the painter's beliefs. He acquired false ideas of the necessity for self-assertion and of the relative positions of other painters, both dead and living, to himself. The notions of petty commerce among which he had sprung were enabled to keep their hold and to persuade him that one man's success meant another's ruin. "If Tom Girtin had lived, I should have starved!" he once exclaimed; and the exclamation was significant. He thought that a painter's market was as sharply circumscribed as a barber's, and that just as the chins to be shaved within a certain radius of Maiden Lane could be counted, so could the commissions awaiting an artist. The notion of creating his own market, of appealing to new and unjaded admirations, was barricaded out by those youthful

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experiences to which he so carefully refrained from providing an antidote. The notion of putting forth his powers in single-hearted obedience to his own predilections, and with no intention but the service of his own sincerity, had to wait until he was middle-aged before it took its proper place as his guide.

Turner's hiding instinct had another and perhaps even more serious consequence. It left him without the best of all trainings in technique. His own industry and ingenuity more than supplied this want so far as water-colours were concerned. In that branch of art he was a pioneer, and had nothing more to learn from his contemporaries while he was still a lad. As a painter in oil he was in a very different position. He had learnt in a bad school, for he had worked in Sir Joshua's studio, where the example set was unsuited to youth, and little was taught by precept. At the Academy he scarcely seems to have studied colour. The best teachers of technique are fellow-students, who hand on good traditions and enforce them at an age when the temptation to sacrifice soundness for a seductive brilliance is not so dangerous as it afterwards becomes. The average of technical proficiency is highest in the most gregarious schools, where experiments have to run the gauntlet between rows of experts, and the tiro's difficulties can be smoothed out for him by his neighbour. At the best of times our English painters are not well placed in this respect. The seclusion in which a British artist works after his student days are over restricts the spread of knowledge, both of good and evil, and leaves his neighbour to puzzle out for himself many things from which a more unselfish system would remove all difficulty. And Turner carried secrecy to such an extreme that he might as well have worked in prison. Few ever saw him paint. He used, indeed, to go down to the Academy on varnishing days and play queer pranks on his pictures, but as often as not his object seems rather to have been to astonish

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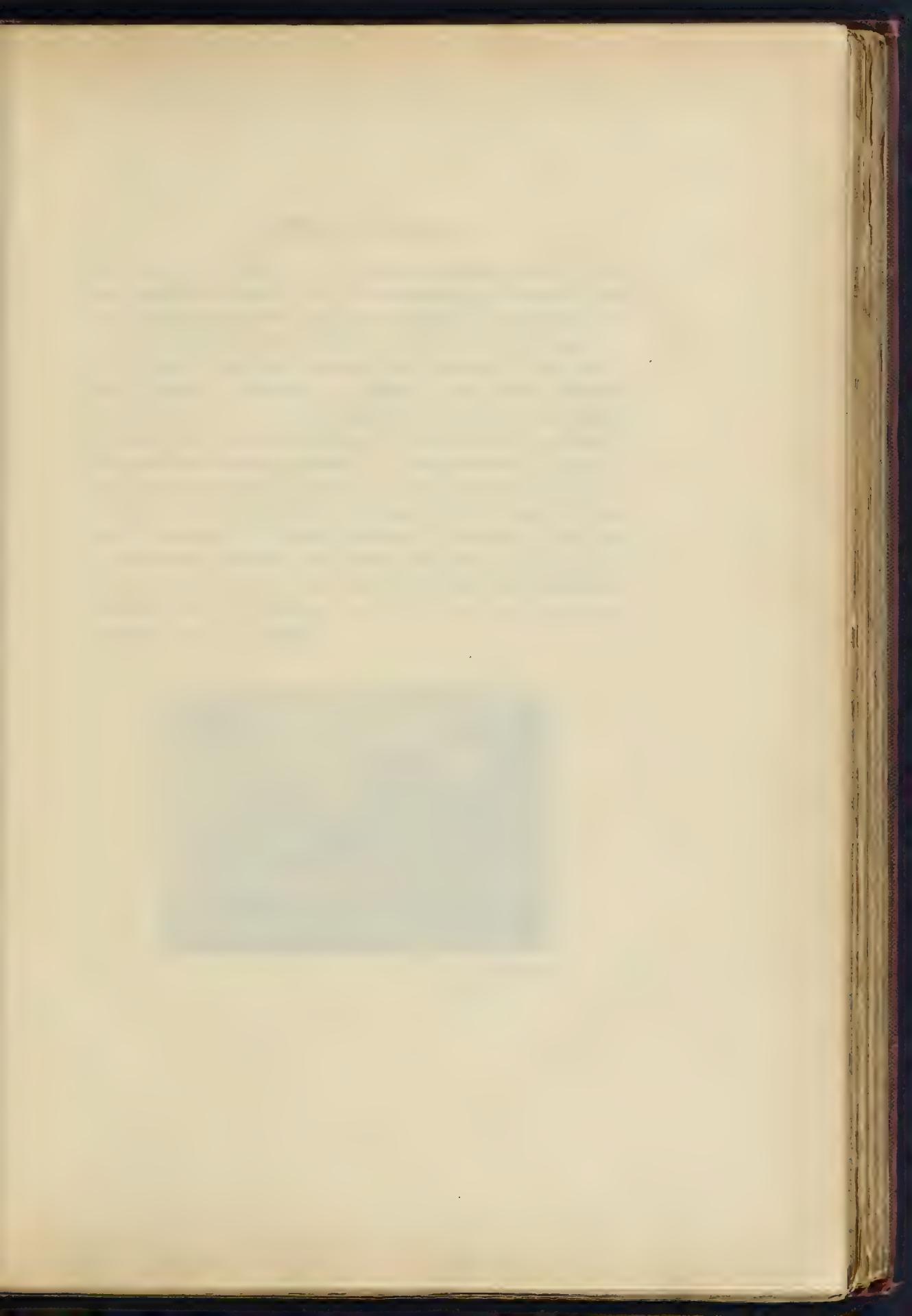
his colleagues than to do anything serious. So far as we can discover by examining his work, his methods in oil were arrived at partly by looking at the old masters, and partly by deductions from his experience in water-colour. He never understood, or at least seldom took into account, the action of vehicles on pigments, or of one pigment on another. It is fair to suppose that a man of his ambition, and one who showed so much solicitude for his own fame after death, was not indifferent to what time might do with his creations. In old age no doubt he did become careless and allowed his pictures to deteriorate in his own house. But age deadens the ambitions of us all. It is in youth and in what we call our prime that we dream dreams of self-projection into the future, and take thought for the handing down to posterity of our name and the memory of what little we may do. But even in youth and middle age Turner did things he would surely have avoided had he known their consequences. We may, then, put down such proceedings to ignorance, and that ignorance to the determined seclusion in which he chose to pass his working life.

But Turner's aloofness had another cause than pride. And this brings me to the third condition external to his special gift which affected the quality of his art. In a letter partly printed by Walter Thornbury, seven main features of Turner's character are set out by John Ruskin. One of these is sensuality; and of this, I imagine, Ruskin was chiefly thinking when, a line or two farther on, he adds the advice, "Don't try to mask the dark side." In England we persevere, with more courage perhaps than wisdom, in the pretence that the feelings which man shares with the beasts are submissive to the will, and need not be taken into account in inquiring into the motives of any one outside the criminal classes. Even when applied to people of average passions such a theory is a pathetic delusion. If we relied upon it in the case of a man like Turner it would leave us

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without any key—except, indeed, lunacy—to much of his conduct. We have plenty of evidence that with him the animal propensities were abnormally strong. His biographers tell strange tales of how he spent his week-ends. He had various mistresses; and the piles of sketches left behind him bear occasional witness to dark bye-ways in his habits and character. In short, unless we accept the curious but not uncommon assumption that a man with strong sexual proclivities is worthless in all other ways, we must acknowledge that much that seemed eccentric and mysterious in Turner's conduct to his friends had a simple if not entirely agreeable explanation. These embarrassing *obsessions* were probably inherited from the ill-balanced, not to say insane, mother. They account for much, not only in his social behaviour, but in his art also, that seems strange and occasionally grotesque. A heated imagination is apt to forget its cause, and to drive its owner into extravagances which have little enough to do with the first incentive. It is quite possible that, if psychology were a better informed and more exact science than it is, we should find that the colour violences into which Turner fell in his last years had a great deal more to do with aberrations of his fancy than with any change in the constitution of his eyes.

I have now described what seem to me the chief external influences by which Turner's special aesthetic gift was biassed. These were his birth in London, his sensitive pride, and his sensuality. To these modifying causes some would add a fourth, in his defective education. But there, I think, a mistake has been made. The evidence of his own writings exists to show that, wherever he obtained it, his knowledge of such matters as a painter was expected to know in the days of George III. was above rather than below the average. As life progressed, Turner seems to have shed his education. His method of expressing himself in words became more and more involved as he



THE THAMES: NEAR WINDSOR.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

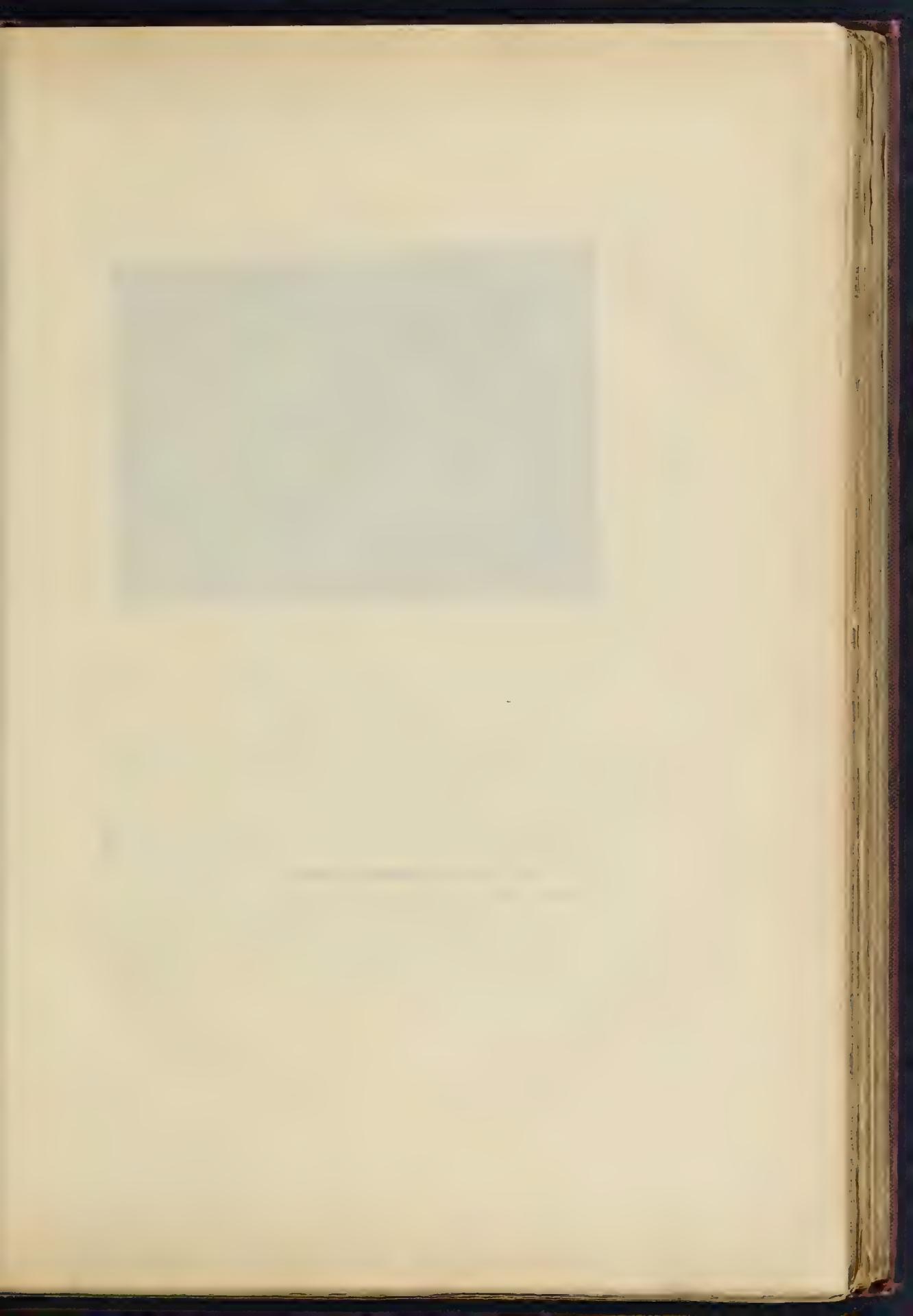
(67 - 131)

In the Collection of
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grew older, until it arrived at the climax of incomprehensibility in the later codicils to his will. But in his earlier years he could write clearly enough, and could maintain a standard of orthography which was more than respectable for his time and class. To this question, which appears to me both important and interesting, I shall have to return presently. Meanwhile it is enough to say that the difficulties which beset Turner in his later years when he tried to express himself in words, should be reckoned among the results of his secret mode of life, rather than among its causes. In early manhood he possessed quite enough command of his native language and quite enough general education to make the belief that deficiency in those particulars drove him to avoidance of his friends inadmissible. He began, in fact, with an educational equipment which would have been quite sufficient for his needs had he lived in such a way as to keep it in good order, and added to it, by making the most of the social opportunities ensured to him by his genius.





THE GARRETEER'S PETITION.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(21 - 30)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



CHAPTER II.

Turner's Birth—His Parentage—His Father and Mother—His Education—The Commencement of his Artistic Career—Early Works.

JOSEPH MALLORD WILLIAM TURNER was baptized in London, in the Church of St. Paul, Covent Garden, on the 14th of May, 1775. In the parish register the second name is written "Mallad."* His other Christian names seem to have been derived from his maternal uncles. As to the date of his birth, the most direct if not the most trustworthy evidence we can point to, is the note

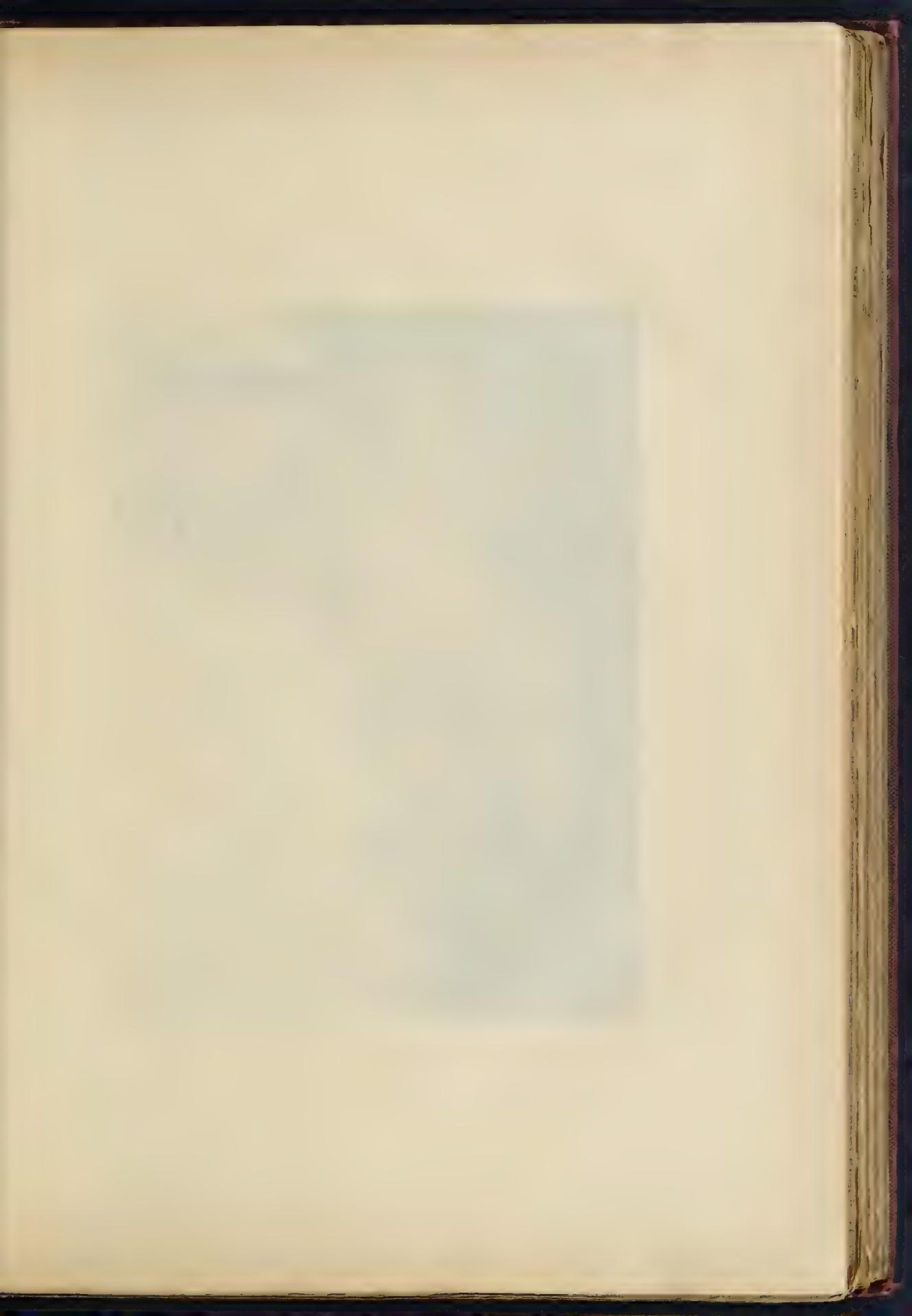
* The entry runs:—"May 14—Joseph Mallad William, son of William Turner by Mary his Wife."

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in one of the numerous codicils to his will, that he was born on St. George's Day—the 23rd of April. He made so many different assertions about his own origin that even this plain statement cannot be taken as final; but we have no reason to doubt that he was baptized shortly after his birth in the little house in Maiden Lane, which was pulled down eighty years ago.* This house consisted of a basement, less completely sunk into the earth than usual, for it was lighted by a window rising above the level of the pavement, and not by a grated well; of a shop opening from an arched entry at the side which led to buildings in the rear; and of two upper storeys, *plus* a small attic at the top. Maiden Lane was less smoke-bound a century ago than it is now, and the house must have had at least eight rooms of a sort. For a married tradesman with one child it was a commodious home enough, and seems by no means to have justified much that has been written of the squalor of Turner's early surroundings.

As to his family, that was and remains a little mysterious. The solid facts on which his biographers agree are scanty. His father, William Turner, was a native of South Molton, in Devonshire, where the painter's paternal grandparents are said to have spent the whole of their lives. Their son William came to London at some unknown date, and there, on the 29th of August, 1773, in the Church of St. Paul, Covent Garden, he was married to one Mary Marshall. Twenty-one months later a son of the couple was baptized in the same church. According to the statement already referred to, the boy's birth had taken place on the previous St. George's Day. Unfortunately even these naked-looking facts are open to a certain amount of doubt.

* In 1821. In a small way Maiden Lane is classic ground. Theatrical memories especially cluster round the neighbourhood; but in the Lane itself once lived Sancroft; so did Andrew Marvell, who here repulsed Lord Danby and the King's guineas; here too, and that not so very long before William Turner put out his barber's pole, François Marie Arouet de Voltaire spent his two years in London.



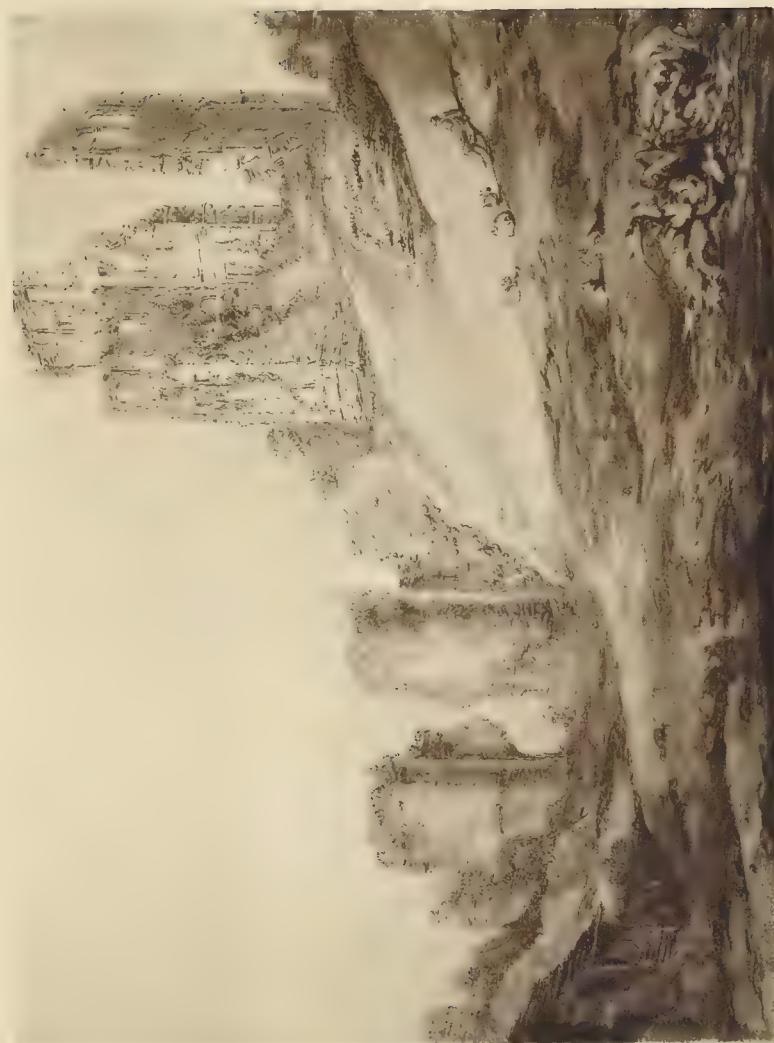


CORFE CASTLE.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

81 [11]

THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.



HIS PARENTS

Walter Thornbury calls old William Turner's wife "Mary Marshall (or Mallord)," and in after years Turner is said to have lost his temper more than once when allusions were made to some asserted connection with the Marshalls of Shelford Manor in the County of Nottingham. Of his mother's personality scarcely anything is known, but Walter Thornbury prints the following description*:

"She was a native of Islington, but at Turner's decease they had not succeeded in finding an entry of her baptism. There is an unfinished portrait of her by her son, one of his first attempts. . . . There is a strong likeness to Turner about the nose and eyes. Her eyes are blue, lighter than his, her nose aquiline, and she has a slight fall in the nether lip. Her hair is well frizzed—for which she might have been indebted to her husband's professional skill—and is surmounted by a cap with large flappers. She stands erect, and looks masculine, not to say fierce; report proclaims her to have been a person of ungovernable temper, and to have led her husband a sad life. In stature, like her son, she was below the average height. In the latter part of her life she was insane and in confinement. Turner might have inherited from her his melancholy turn of mind. I never saw her, never heard him mention her, nor ever heard of anyone who had seen her."

The bulk of this description is fourth-hand.† It had to filter through old William Turner, Hannah Danby, Turner's housekeeper, and the two Trimmers, father and son, before it reached Thornbury's

* "Kindly furnished to me by the Rev. Mr. Trimmer, the eldest son of Turner's old friend and executor, the Rector of Heston. Mr. Trimmer obtained his facts from an authority no less unquestionable than Hannah Danby, Turner's old housekeeper, who had them from the Painter's father."—*Thornbury*, vol. i., p. 5.

† Thornbury prints his quotation in such a fashion that it is not easy to know exactly who is speaking. So far as his page shows, the individual who says "I never heard of anyone who had seen her," and "I knew him [William Turner] well," are one and the same person. It is a case, perhaps, of confusion between the two Trimmers, but even then these assertions are scarcely to be reconciled.

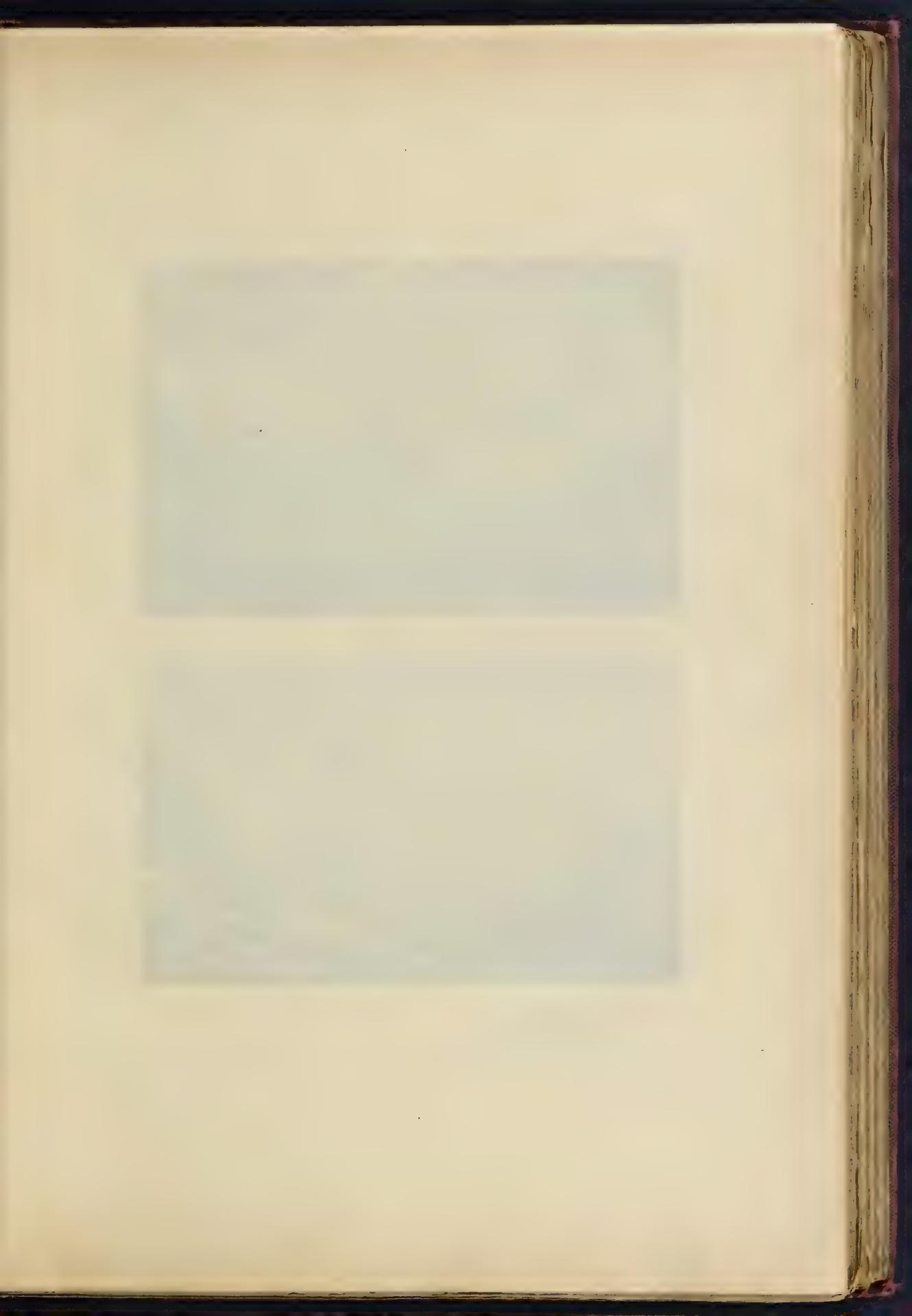
TURNER

pages. The assertion about Mary Turner's madness has been confirmed, however, by Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse. He found entries in the books of Bethlehem Hospital showing that one Mary Turner was received there from St. Paul's, Covent Garden, in 1800, and discharged, uncured, the following year, one of her sureties being a wig-maker.* Other items of information about Mrs. Turner are that she was the sister of one Marshall, a butcher at Brentford, that she was first cousin to the grandmother of Dr. Shaw, author of "Gallops in the Antipodes," and the younger sister of Mrs. Harpur, wife to the curate of Islington and grandmother of Mr. Henry Harpur, one of Turner's executors. Mr. Monkhouse adds that Harpur fell in love with his wife while he was at Oxford, and that the marriage of the pair brought the lady's sister to London. It is now, I fear, too late to add much to this confused information, and we must be content to know that the patronymic of the painter's mother was either "Marshall" or "Mallord," that in blood at least she may have been better born than her husband, and that from her the painter inherited the temperament in which his genius, as well as certain embarrassing strains in his character, was rooted.

We know a great deal more about William Turner; but here again Thornbury leaves us in doubt as to whether an often-quoted description is at first or second hand. He prints the two following paragraphs, which I quote exactly as he gives them:—

"There is a portrait of Turner, senior, by his son, much later than that of his mother. This, Mr. Trimmer says, he shewed my father years ago as one of his attempts at portrait. It is full face, the eyes and general expression are most correct, though I do not recognise the nose. A few years before his death, Mr. Turner the engraver made a drawing of him, which is a fair likeness. Turner, the son, hearing of the circumstance, said it must be destroyed, and

* "Turner" (Great Artists Series), p. 9.



CHAMONIX (TWO DRAWINGS).

Original Water-Colour Drawing by COZENS. Copy by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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In the Collection of
HERBERT HORNE, Esq.



HIS PARENTS

the engraver, to pacify him, made a copy of it, which he gave up, and Turner destroyed it. At this time old Turner was decrepit.

“‘As I knew him well,’ Mr. Trimmer says, ‘I will try and describe him. He was about the height of his son, a head below the average standard,* spare and muscular, with small blue eyes, parrot nose, projecting chin, fresh complexion, an index of health, which he apparently enjoyed to the full. He was a chatty old fellow, and talked fast; but from speaking through his nose his words had a peculiar transatlantic twang. He was more cheerful than his son, and had always a smile on his face. When at Sandicomb Lodge, he was to be seen daily at work in his garden, like another Laertes, except on the Tuesday, which was Brentford market-day, when he was often to be seen trudging home with his weekly provisions in a blue handkerchief, where I have often met him, and, asking him after Turner, had answer, “Painting a picture of the Battle of Trafalgar,”’ &c., &c.”

It is difficult to say for how much of these two paragraphs Trimmer, senior, is responsible; but wherever they come from, they leave a vivid impression of the little Punch-like barber whose character differed so strangely in most ways from that of his son. Apart from his dreary marital experiences, the old man seems to have enjoyed a happy life. This, indeed, he deserved, for there can be no doubt that he did his duty as a father.

I am not grounding this assertion upon the confused accounts which have come down to us of the boy’s schooling. Thornbury says that he was taught to read by his father, but not to write; that in 1785 he went to his first school, at New Brentford; that in the following year he migrated to an academy in Soho, kept by one Palice; that in

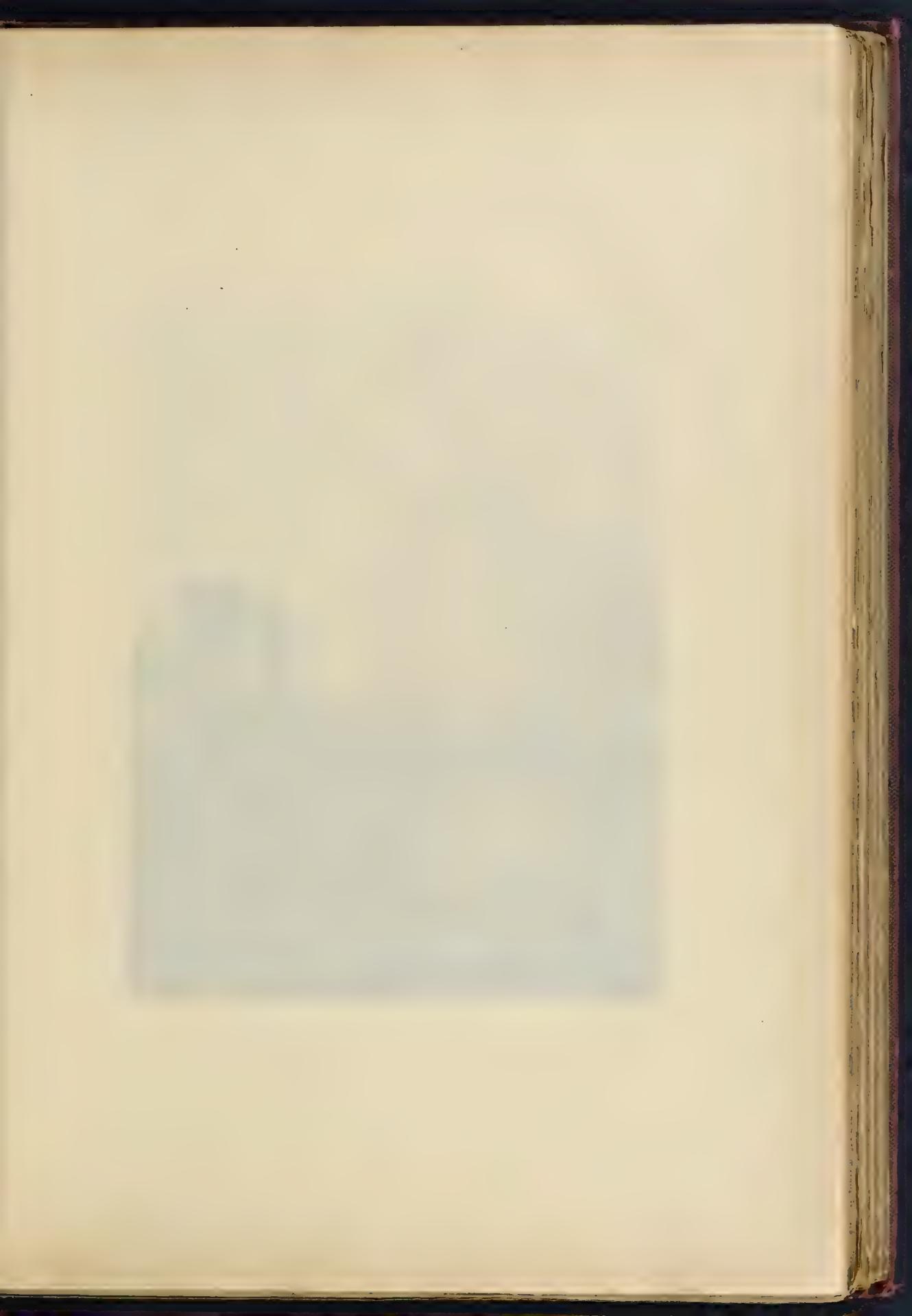
* Monkhouse prints this sentence “with a head below the average standard,” and so fails to understand it. Mr. Trimmer meant to convey that William Turner was a “head” shorter than a man of middle height, which would probably mean that he was about 5 feet 3 inches.

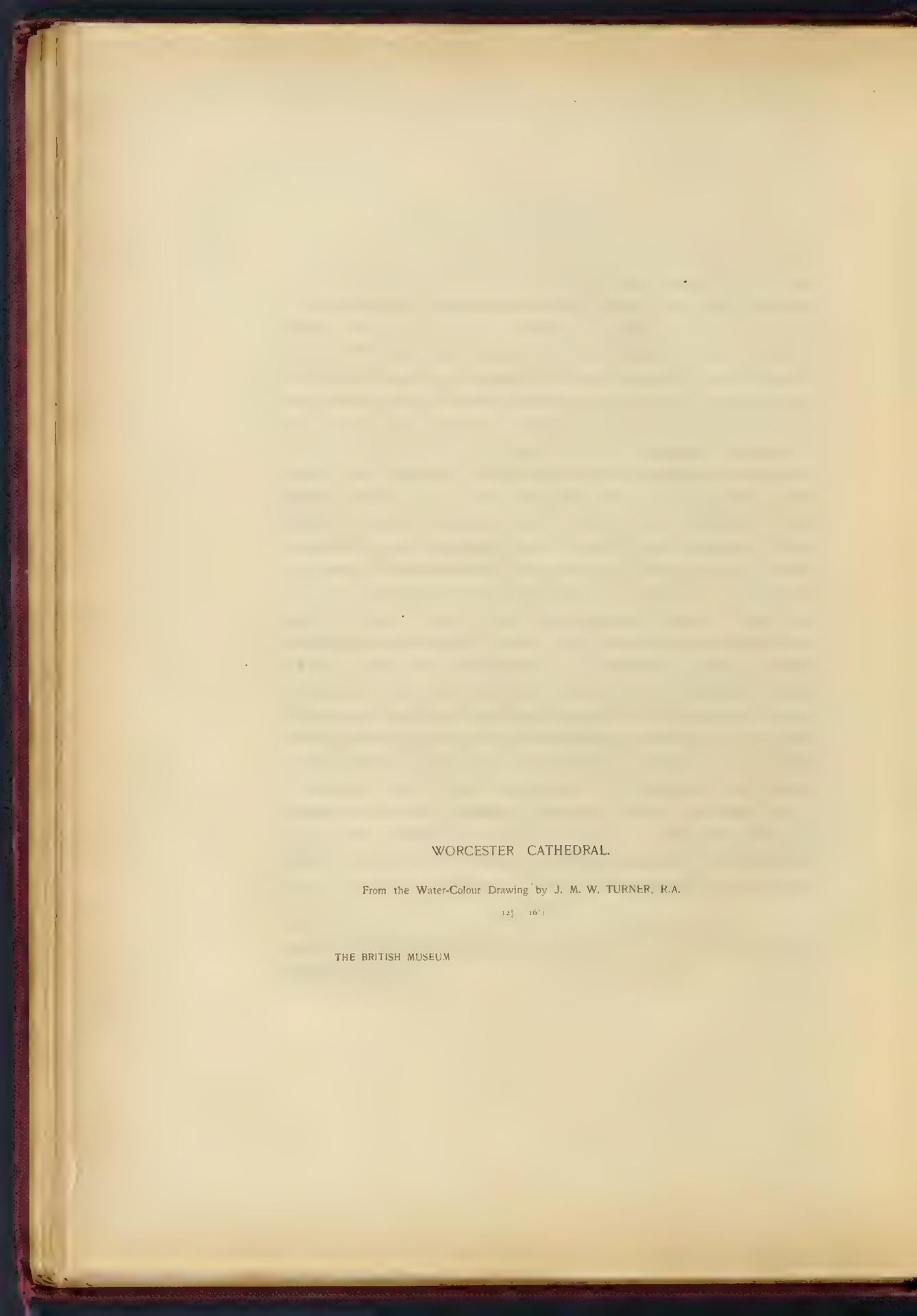
TURNER

1788 he went to a school at Margate, kept by one Coleman ; that in or about 1788 he worked in the office of Thomas Malton the architect in Long Acre, also in Hardwick's office, also in the Royal Academy Schools, and yet again in Paul Sandby's drawing-school in St. Martin's Lane.* The impression conveyed is that Thornbury put down all he was told, and made no attempt to sift his information. Such a shuttlecock education as he describes would be enough, as Mr. Monkhouse says, to spoil the intellectual digestion of any boy. It is now too late to find out where and how Turner really was taught the rudiments of learning ; but the proofs are abundant that his schooling was thorough enough, so far as it went. We have been told by most of the painter's biographers that he was a dunce, that he could neither write nor speak his own language, that, in short, he was uneducated. And yet plenty of evidence exists to prove that, judged by the standard of his own class, whether we take the class in which he was born or that into which he rose, he was exceptionally well taught for the time. Thornbury says his father was his only teacher until the age of ten, and that writing was not included in the curriculum. And yet, when he was twelve, the boy could sign his name in a good hand. Again, it is certain that after he was well launched on his career he had no time for schooling, and yet his sketch-books are filled with memoranda—drafts of letters, descriptions of social and other experiences, as well as poems—written in the handwriting of a gentleman, and almost invariably well spelt. Hamerton says†—“Turner never was able to spell.” The statement is much too strong. I have read dozens of Turner's letters, and enough manuscript notes of one kind and another to make a substantial volume ; and yet, even in memoranda

* Monkhouse adds to all these pupilages one under Humphry Repton, the landscape gardener, at Romford. (“Dictionary of National Biography.” See also “Notes and Queries,” 3rd Series, I., 484.)

† “Life,” p. 16.





WORCESTER CATHEDRAL.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

12½ x 16½

THE BRITISH MUSEUM



HIS EDUCATION

intended only for his own eye, mistakes are rare, and the few which occur are such as even well-educated people were prone to in his day. Such blunders as the often-quoted one of writing "harmonuous" for "harmonious" were quite beneath Turner, and must be put down to the accidents of printing. In one instance he describes a party to which he went in Rome, and names many of the guests. These were of various nationalities, English, Italian, German, and yet he gives their names with an accuracy worthy of the *Almanach de Gotha*. It is quite true that he misused words, and wrote sometimes, especially towards the end of his life, in such a style that no human being could be sure of what he meant; but even then the impression conveyed is not so much that he had never been educated, as that his imagination had developed while his power over words had grown rusty with disuse. His verbal confusion increased with age, so it can hardly have been due to want of school. In youth, especially when dealing with facts, he was clear enough. Thinking in images is much commoner than one is apt to suppose. One writer on Turner plumply declares it impossible to think without words! An amazing assertion, seeing how often most of us have to hunt round for a word to express some image which is standing, visible, measurable, and complete, in our minds. If one may be allowed to give oneself as an instance, I myself habitually think without words, and turn to them chiefly when I want to convey a thought to someone else. In the light of this habit I find no difficulty in understanding how Turner, in his later years, so often found himself embogged in his native language. His embarrassments arose, not so much from an initially defective education, as from the lopsided mental development caused by his peculiar mode of life. His solitary broodings filled him with vague but ambitious imagery, while they did nothing to increase his power over the machinery of verbal expression. In his poetry we continually encounter fine images, which miss their effect because they have been entirely thought out as images, and no attempt

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has been made to clothe them in words while their form was yet soft and pliable. Worth, the famous *couturier*, used to say that the whole secret of successful dressmaking lay in founding your design upon your materials, and not *vice versa*. It is just the same with writing. The means of expression must be kept in view while the imagination works, or you will find yourself landed, as Turner was so often, with an idea on your hands to which you can give no satisfactory form.

In support of what I have said as to Turner's early education I will here quote some examples of his use of English and dealings with orthography. The following letter was written on the 4th of November, 1815, from Queen Anne Street:—

DEAR JOHNS,

I am glad to hear of your success, and of C. Eastlake's particularly fortunate and, I may say I believe, unprecedented good luck. Appianici, a Milanese who painted the same subject, viz., Buonaparte [*was not so lucky*], tho' report stated the picture [*was bought for*] £1,500; yet report only was its friend, and it still remains, I fancy, in the city unsold.

Your letter arrived the day after the case left London, containing, not what you expect or perhaps will like—as you seem to have thought only of Dido, whose unwieldy frame-work might even of itself produce a miscarriage in so long a journey, the first piece I ever thought of as being generally wrong—you will find, alas, everything contrary to your wishes, which I am, believe me, sorry for. But even had I been less quick in dispatching the two I have sent, viz., the picture exhibited last year, Bligh Sands, and Jason, an old favourite with some, still I could not have sent any 30 or 40 guinea pictures, for I have none by me or [*in a condition to finish*] upon so short a notice, and the neglect of sending my letters after me to Yorkshire had placed me, as usual, in the rear, as well as prevented me getting anything forward in that ratio of price.

However, you may do exactly as you please about them, only have the goodness to consider the pictures sent as *under your care*, and if they contribute one shilling more to the treasury of the exhibition at Plymouth I shall feel happy and proud of being an adjunct with the intentions of my worthy friends in Plymouth towards establishing or promoting the Arts.

I have the honour to be

Yours most truly and obliged,

J. M. TURNER.*

* The original of this letter is in the possession of Mr. C. Fairfax Murray.



CHRISTCHURCH, OXFORD.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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THE BRITISH MUSEUM.



HIS EDUCATION

The second example is a letter written on the 4th of September, 1816, from Farnley * :—

DEAR HOLWORTHY,

Having just returned from part of my Yorkshire sketching trip, I am more at liberty than when I wrote to you last, mind I say wrote you, because I have received an accusatory message “that you expected to hear from me.” I must admit (tho’ I requested you would suit yourself as to time at Mr. Knight’s, you to let me know when) I did not say precisely that Mr. Fawkes lived at Farnley Hall, near the market town of Otley, in the West Riding of the County of York, and for which omission you have thought proper to punish me by your silence when, how or where you are, was, or will be; so I beg leave to say that having finished nearly what I proposed doing this season in Yorkshire, [I] think I can do myself the pleasure of waiting upon Mr. Knight at Langold within a fortnight. If I were to meet you there [*the pleasure*] would be much enhanced to me, and only do not say the time is too long or too short, that I never wrote or am not yours truly

J. M. W. TURNER.

P.S.—And I want your advice about my calling or not at Belvoir.

I have introduced a few words here and there, in italics and between brackets, which are required to complete the sense. They, or others to the same effect, had obviously been in Turner’s mind, but had eluded materialisation in ink, as words are apt to do when a writer is thinking rather of the substance than the form of what he has to say. These examples are not cunningly selected; they are fair specimens of his composition at the time, and even if they were not so, they would confirm my view, for, after all, a single fairly well expressed letter is better evidence of education than many ill-expressed ones are of the reverse. Turner fell over his words. His thoughts travelled a great deal faster than his pen. Consequently his sentences are full of involuntary ellipses and of disconnected rather than ignorant grammar. Even when the obscurity seems most profound the sense can, in most cases, be made clear by restoring some dropped-out word or comma. In the letter to Holworthy the only real

* Communicated to me by Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse.

TURNER

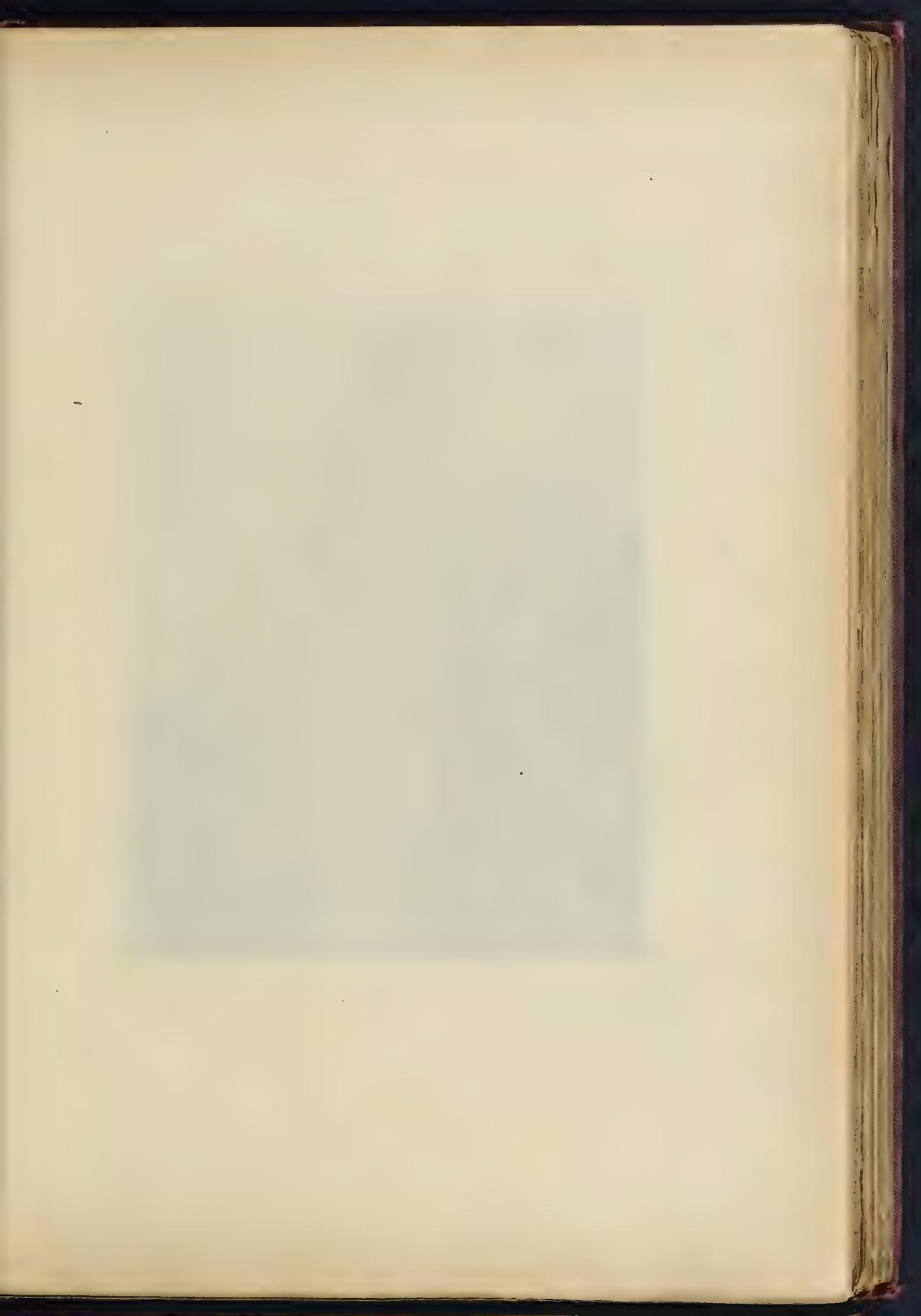
blunder is the use of "was" after "you," and that, we must remember, had been in Turner's boyhood an accepted idiom, as well as a very pretty and convenient one.*

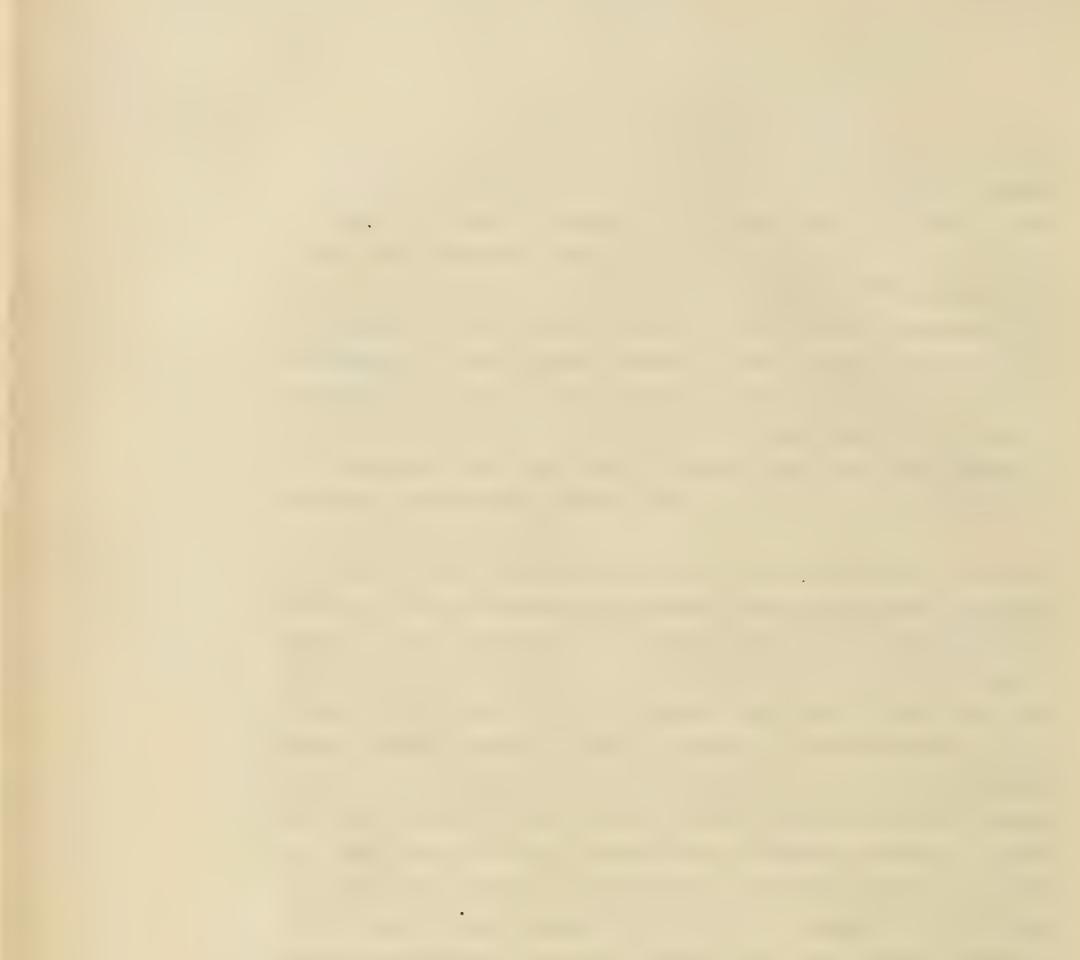
It seems, then, more than probable that old William Turner was more successful with his son's education than has been supposed. The catalogue of schools quoted above amounts to an overdraft on our credulity; but that, somewhere and in some fashion, the boy was well grounded in "the three R's" his own writings prove. The story of his education, like other matters relating to his early years, appears to have been deliberately obscured both by himself and his father—why, we can only conjecture.

In any case, it seems certain that Turner obtained a far better training in the elements of knowledge than most boys of his station. As to whether Brentford or Margate should be credited with his introduction to letters it is now too late to determine; personally I incline to the latter, for it is known that when he was nine years old he made a drawing of Margate Church. Between the two, at any rate, he learnt enough syntax and orthography to leave him without any serious obstacle to his ambitions but those of his own making. In other ways William Turner was an excellent parent. He was industrious, economical, good-tempered, and long-suffering, and must have supplied some corrective in the boy's constitution to the unruly propensities inherited from his mother. And we find him doing his duty when the next question arose, that of a trade for his son.

Maiden Lane was on the outskirts of what was then the artists' quarter, and old Turner's customers, we are told, included not a few painters, architects, and other followers of the great profession. The barber is said to have begun by wishing to put the boy to his own

* I may refer those who would like to go more deeply into this question, to the sketch books in the National Gallery. They are full of notes, draughts of letters, draughts of verses, &c., &c., which seem to me quite inconsistent with much that has been written upon Turner's want of education.





THE TOM TOWER, OXFORD.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



HIS TRAINING IN ART

trade, but he must have changed his mind betimes. The child's bent had declared itself very early indeed. His first recorded attempt at anything in the nature of art was the copying of the arms engraved on some pieces of plate belonging to a jeweller in the neighbouring Southampton Street. Then came the drawing of Margate Church, followed by various exercises of the time-honoured sort on the walls and copy-books of his Brentford school, and by the colouring of a large number of engravings in a copy of Boswell's "Antiquities of England and Wales" (published in 1785). These were done for one John Lees, of Brentford, who paid the boy at the rate of fourpence a plate. At about the same time he was making drawings, coloured copies of engravings, and so on, which were exposed in the Maiden Lane shop-window, and sold for a shilling or two a-piece. It may fairly be conjectured that the barber was led to revise his views by the earning power thus suggested rather than by any real comprehension of his son's gift. In any case he did revise them, and promptly. Among the artists who periodically submitted their chins to his razor was Thomas Stothard, then a man of about thirty; and tradition hints that his advice had something to do with the final decision. However that may have been, young Turner was at most eleven years of age when his training in art began. His father vacillated, of course, at first. Between 1786 and 1790 the boy seems to have studied under or worked for some seven or eight different masters. The more serious of these were Thomas Malton, the architectural draughtsman, of whom Turner used afterwards to speak with gratitude; Thomas Hardwick the architect, who seems to have been the first to perceive his scholar's true line of advance; and Sir Joshua Reynolds. A pleasant story has come down to us in connection with the boy's apprenticeship to Hardwick. It is said that William Porden, impressed by the cleverness with which young Turner had washed in backgrounds to certain architectural perspectives, offered to give him indentures without a premium. Old

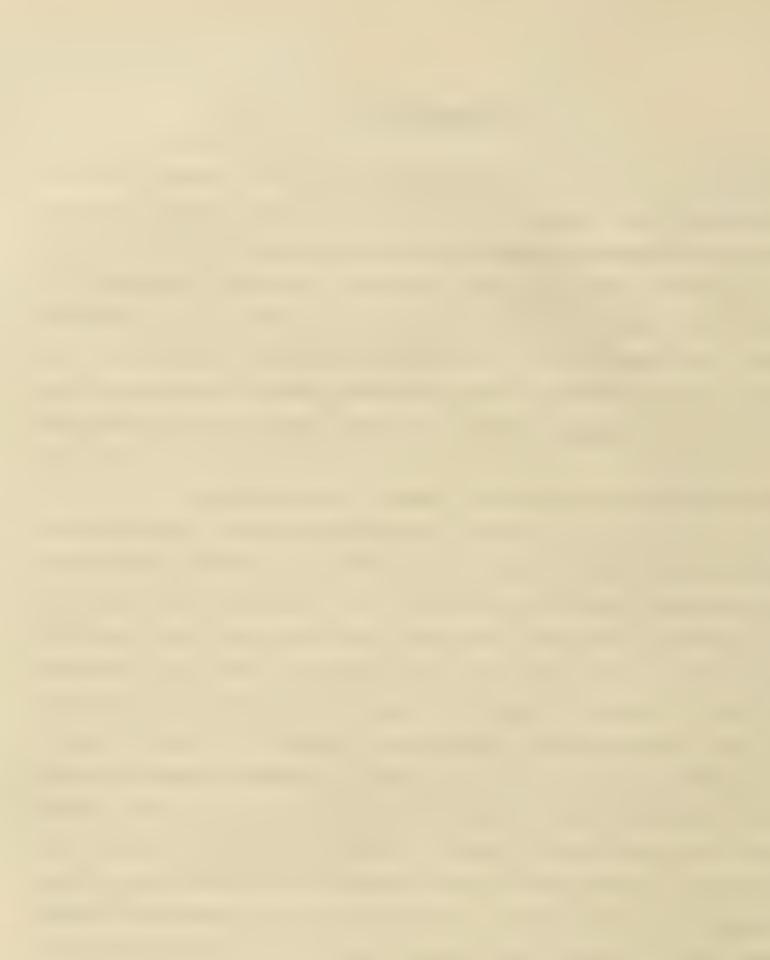
TURNER

Turner, however, was not seduced by the offer. He had lately received a legacy—we are not told the amount—and believing that his son would do better in an office of higher standing than Porden's, he determined to devote the whole sum to paying Hardwick's considerable fee. Turner used to say in after life, “Dad never praised me for anything but saving a halfpenny ;” but, niggardly or not in spoken praise, the old man showed a practical belief in his son's abilities, and did all his limited knowledge could suggest to ensure their fruition.

After a short experience of young Turner's powers, Hardwick advised him to devote himself to landscape painting, and to enter the schools of the Royal Academy. This he did in 1790,* and at about the same time received permission to work under the roof of Sir Joshua Reynolds. By this time Reynolds had practically abandoned painting, and Turner, like other so-called pupils of the great President, spent his time, no doubt, in copying his master's pictures. One must, however, include Sir Joshua's name among those by whom the young artist was chiefly influenced because, as a matter of fact, Turner's early practice was very strongly affected by what he saw in Leicester Fields. His knowledge of Sir Joshua's methods must have come through copying and the talk of fellow-scholars ; but however it came, there can be no doubt of its effect. His own earlier productions, especially the portrait, painted in or about 1792, which belonged to Mr. Ruskin, and the considerably later portrait in the National Gallery, are technically

* The date usually given for Turner's entry at Somerset House is 1789, but his name first occurs in the Academy registers on the 21st of July, 1790. Between that date and the 2nd of December, 1791, he put in 96 appearances, or rather more than 50 per cent. of the possible total. All these entries relate to the “Plaister Academy.” On the 14th of November, 1792, he began to work in the “Life Academy,” where he was fairly constant (48 attendances out of a possible 75), until the 26th of February, 1793, when his name appears on the registers for the last time. His signatures in the R.A. book are always “W. Turner,” “Wm. Turner,” or “William Turner.” I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. C. Fairfax Murray for the opportunity of consulting these registers.





SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE CLOISTERS.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(204 691)

THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.



HIS TRAINING IN ART

very like the last works of Reynolds, between whose example and that of Wilson in landscape must be shared the credit of forming Turner's first style as an oil painter. In the Royal Academy Schools Turner was a more successful student than is commonly supposed. The sketch-books in the National Gallery contain a few life studies which are up to the highest level of students' work. One of these, indeed, a recumbent female figure, sharply foreshortened, is more searching and better understood than any other life study by an English painter of those days I ever saw. As time went on, Turner seems to have forgotten, or lost interest in, the literal facts of human structure, just as he forgot the structure of his native language. That he once had it all at his fingers' ends is proved by these scanty but decisive remains of his student days.

With Turner's exit from the Academy Schools in 1793, at the age of eighteen, his subjection to parental authority no doubt came to an end. It is probable that he had long been independent of his father in the matter of money, even if their relative positions had not already been reversed. In 1790 he had exhibited his first drawing at the Academy, a view of Lambeth Palace.* In each of the years 1791, 1792 and 1793 he had been represented by two contributions, one of which, a Bristol view, may possibly have been in oil. In this year—1793—he is supposed to have set up a studio for himself, for the catalogue gives his address no longer at 26, Maiden Lane, but in the adjoining alley, Hand Court. Early in the same year, or perhaps in the autumn of 1792, he had made the first of his sketching tours, starting from Bristol from the house of his friend Narraway, a fell-monger, on a borrowed pony. It is pretty certain that from this time onwards Turner was able to keep himself, to help his parents, and to lay the nest-egg of the fortune which was afterwards to become so considerable. It is a good moment, then, to pause and picture to

* It was in the Winter Exhibition at Burlington House in 1887, lent by Mrs. Courtauld.

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ourselves the remarkable person with whom converging forces had enriched the Anglo-Saxon race.

In outward appearance he was short, muscular, large-headed, rather Jewish in feature, with small and keen blue eyes, hooked and fleshy nose, and sensuous lips. In character he was impulsive, irritable, sensitive and tender-hearted as a girl, ardent in all his desires, and full of a strange pride, as if the soul of an exiled king had wandered into his bourgeois body. Intellectually he had a remarkable faculty of observation, a prodigious memory for what he had *seen*, a voracious appetite for things to be grasped and digested by the eye, and the diffuse, formless imagination of a Celtic bard. As to his acquirements, good and evil, he had the habit of industry, the instinctive distrust, the conviction that life is a battle, and the mania for petty gains, of the small and struggling tradesman. Among all these the ruling characteristics, those which determined his artistic career and moulded his social life, were his passionate temperament, his *farouche* pride, his instinct of competition, the memory in his eye, and the vague, half-articulate but unresting energy of his imagination. If we stripped him of any one of these, we should find him difficult to explain. Without pride, he would have mixed frankly with his kind, and avoided many things in his art which arose from pure ignorance; without his trade jealousy—as a man he was not jealous—he would never have wasted his powers in crushing fancied rivals; without his miraculous memory his art would have been simpler, less encyclopædic, and more closely knit; without his industry and desire of gain, he would have failed to provide himself with that secure financial basis which enabled him to follow his own inclinations from adolescence to old age. An enforced aloofness seems to have been one of his traits from very early years. We hear of his friendship with various young men of his own age and calling, such as Robert Ker Porter, Henry Aston Barker, Thomas Girtin, and others; but it is always intermittent, and never ends in the frank intimacy one likes to



EDINBURGH FROM THE WATER OF LEITH.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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In the Collection of
T. F. BLACKWELL, Esq.



HIS FIRST PICTURES

associate with life in studios. Plenty of evidence exists to suggest that with nothing to hide, he would have been a sociable creature, for on the comparatively rare occasions when he came among his friends he thoroughly enjoyed himself. The two skeletons in his cupboard—his knowledge of his mother's semi-insanity, and his own inheritance, partial though it was, of her temperament—cut him off in early manhood from the delights of free companionship, and turned him in later years into a kind of social lighthouse, blazing out now and then to dazzle his acquaintance between long periods of occultation. This is not the character of a happy man, and Turner can seldom have known happiness when not absorbed in his work. He was full of ambitions inconsistent with his state, and must have spent much of his time in dreaming dreams from which the awakenings were merciless. The notion that he was soured and disappointed by the neglect of his art is hardly borne out by facts, but in the contrast between himself as he was—the son of William and Mary Turner, and the sultan of various illiterate domestics—and the imaginings of his restless brain, the elements existed of a tragic discontent.

Turner's independent career may, as I have already said, be taken to have begun in 1793, after he had left the Academy Schools. From that time onwards he managed his own affairs, living mainly by the commissions, which were then so plentiful, for topographical drawings, portraits of country houses and such-like, but also by the sale of drawings made to sell and by occasional teaching.* The first oil picture he is known to have exhibited at the Royal Academy was there in 1797. It is now in the National Gallery.†

* He gave lessons at five shillings an hour, to begin with—a fee afterwards raised to a guinea. That he disliked teaching, the reader will scarcely need to be told.

† The Catalogue calls it "Moonlight, a Study at Millbank," and then goes on to describe the site as a little east of the cottage near Cremorne Pier in which Turner died. As a fact, Millbank is nearly three miles east of Cremorne Pier and the little house in which Turner's surreptitious death took place.

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At this time landscape painting, as we now understand it, afforded a very precarious means of livelihood, whether in England or elsewhere. Wilson, a generation earlier, had starved at it. Gainsborough had looked upon it rather as a pastime than as a serious way of supplementing, to say nothing of making, an income. Such admiration as it excited was given to the Old Masters, and not to many of them. The few moderns who prospered with its help were either topographers, like Joseph Vernet, or advertising charlatans, like Loutherbourg, who drew attention to themselves by extraneous devices. The idea of buying a modern landscape for its beauty alone had occurred to few, and so, with his keen eye to the main chance, it is not surprising that for some years Turner was content to travel the old well-worn groove. Any drawing which reproduced a recognisable scene and was within what he would have called a low "ratio of price" was sure of a purchaser. His first care, then, after leaving the Schools was to gather material. He began those tours through England which were to occupy so much of his time and to give him a knowledge of his native country which no one, perhaps, has rivalled. Between 1790 and the end of the century he produced an enormous number of drawings of English churches, cathedrals, castles, and other buildings. If these had all been done from the actual objects, they would have enabled us, with time and patience, to tabulate his tours. Unfortunately a great number are modified versions of other men's works. Occasionally we come upon curious indications that some drawing which has all the air, superficially, of having been done on the spot, is really a report at second hand. Turner's intelligence was so keen that he is not often caught tripping, but now and then he "gives himself away" by misapprehending structure, or forgetting the position of the sun, or slurring over some passage which is only difficult because it has not been seen. His explorations, however, were constant. We are told that during his most active years, between 1793 and 1800, he would

TURNER AND GIRTIN

walk twenty-five miles at a time, with his luggage at the end of a stick. As a rule he seems to have been alone; but Girtin is believed to have sometimes gone with him, and on a few rare occasions they appear to have attacked the same subjects at the same time. The young man who made the early drawings here reproduced could scarcely have had a better monitor at his elbow than the author of the "View on the Wharfe" and "Street in Paris," in the Victoria and Albert Museum, or the "Durham," at Manchester. Where Turner was diffuse, delicate, and episodic, Girtin was broad, masculine, and selective.

The acquaintance between the two* is said to have begun when they were both in the employment of John Raphael Smith, the engraver, for whom they used to colour prints. This must have been pretty early in Turner's life, certainly before he left the Academy Schools, for after 1793 his time was otherwise employed. It is asserted that in the latter year Dr. Monro engaged both lads to spend their evenings at his house in the Adelphi Terrace,† and enhance the effect of his own drawings by putting in washes of ink and colour. The Monro tradition has no doubt suffered in the handing down. The various gossipers about it have dwelt probably on the more piquant accounts of how the famous and kindly doctor and his next-door neighbour, John Henderson, dealt with the clever boys they collected round their tables. It is difficult to believe that, at the age of eighteen and upwards, Turner and Girtin would spend many evenings in putting colour washes over another man's outlines for half-a-crown each and their supper. But Dr. Monro had a large collection of drawings and pictures by such artists as Rembrandt, Claude, Wilson, Morland, Gainsborough, Paul Sandby, Thomas Hearne, John Cozens, and others. Of these Turner made copies, with and without variations,

* Turner and Girtin were of nearly the same age: they were both born in 1775.

† The Doctor also had a house at Bushey, and there occasionally the symposia took place, Turner and Girtin sometimes walking all the way out and back. (Watts, "Biographical Sketch," in *Liber Fluviorum*, p. xi.)

TURNER

exercising his own taste and getting at the heart of his model at the same time. One of our plates shows an original Cozens side by side with Turner's version of it. Compare them, and you will see how all the younger man's modifications tend towards a less *découpé* effect.*

Here, I conjecture, we have one of the signs of Girtin's influence, for this peculiar sense of effect was not characteristic of Turner in his youth. Historians of English water-colour painting† have always been ready to confess the abilities of Girtin, and to allow that he affected the practice of his contemporaries to a considerable extent. I think we may go farther, and recognise in his example the true foundation of English water-colour painting. He was the first great leader of the School, the generalissimo, as it were, who gave the army behind him the first real glimpse of the fat plains awaiting a master. Cozens, before him, had shown a profound genius, but his gift was too personal, too exclusively subjective, to be of much use as an example. Little in the way of principle could be distilled from his productions. Girtin, on the other hand, displayed exactly that union of subjective with objective qualities, of deference to conditions with frank sincerity of individual expression, which makes the leader in art.

The history of English painting contains no more fascinating figure than that of Thomas Girtin. Dimly seen as it is through the gathering mists of time and the occasionally malevolent shadows cast upon it by jealous bystanders, it stirs our sympathies as that of one in whom the gift of art was combined with those warm and self-regardless feelings which art is supposed to foster. Born in the same year, nearly in the same month, as Turner, and dying before he was twenty-eight, he left behind him a tradition of frankness, of generosity to his fellow-artists, of a natural refinement increased by continual selection of the best, and

* In his "Early English Water Colour Painters," Monkhouse gives an opportunity for a similar collation, with the same result.

† Especially Mr. Roget, in his "History of the Old Water Colour Society."



NORHAM CASTLE.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(194 x 274)

In the Collection of
LAUNDRY WALTERS, Esq.



TURNER AND GIRTIN

of an unerring eye for the true path of art among the temptations of nature, which compels us to mourn his early death as, possibly, one of the greatest blows our English School has ever received. "Poor Tom Girtin" he was called by those to whom his open nature, his confidence in fate, his reliance upon a universal goodwill, were mere foolishness. "If Tom Girtin had lived, I should have starved," said distrustful Turner; and the saying is at once the best tribute to Girtin and the deepest glimpse into the gulf which separated his character from that of his greatest rival. Before Girtin appeared, the notion of attempting to create with water-colour, of setting it up as a competitor with oil, had scarcely dawned upon its users. To them the very phrase "water-colour painting" would have seemed audacious. They bore themselves humbly, and looked upon their *métier* as a means of adding a shy grace to things meant for the satisfaction, not of the artistic instinct, but of the desire for documents. Such a demand obviously had its limits. A finite number of Norman castles, Gothic abbeys, great houses, and other self-assertive scenes existed, and of these only a small percentage would put in their claims each year. From this point of view it was obvious that if the places were to be taken as the only motives for the drawings, every order received by A. was one lost to B. So thought Turner; but Girtin was more sanguine. He apparently understood that art creates its own demand. He believed that if the form of it he practised boldly widened its field of operations, accepted no arbitrary limits to its methods or aims, and freely communicated its discoveries, it would rise from its parasitical condition and flourish as it had never flourished before.

Some of the comparisons between Turner and Girtin appear to run on mistaken lines. If we wish to get at a real idea of how the two young men stood to one another, and of their respective potentialities, we must confine our survey to the less than twenty-eight years they spent in this world together, and must examine the harvest of those

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years in the light of general experience. It is, I think, impossible to deny that in pure art Girtin's work beats anything done by Turner before 1802. But this in itself need not prevent us from seeing more promise in Turner than in Girtin. As a matter of fact, great artists have more often begun in the tentative, experimental style of the former than in the masterful fashion of his rival. It seems almost a law that the longer an artist remains in the exploring and acquiring stage the richer will be his production when he begins to express. In painting, precocity seldom foretells a fruitful and commanding genius, and Girtin was precocious. He seems never to have hung in the doubts of youth at all. "While Turner was still plodding on in his endless study, Girtin," says Monkhouse, "had already completed his education. The grand style of Piranesi, the large manner of Canaletto, taught him all he needed . . . He soon saw his way to express what he wished to express. He had an extraordinary gift of hand, a wonderful comprehension of any subject he wished to draw. At once he seems to have fixed in his mind an idea of what he wanted to represent—composition, colour, feeling, and all—and he went straight to work and realised it without doubt or difficulty. Few artists can be said to have known so clearly what they wanted to do, and been able to do it with so little check."* There is no exaggeration in this description, and yet to how very few young artists who have afterwards become great could such language be applied! Great painters nearly all begin slowly. Few among them show real power until they have passed the age at which Girtin died. For this reason then, if for no other, it seems not improbable that if Girtin had lived he would have failed to rival the extraordinary development of Turner.

But that makes it all the more desirable that he should not lose the credit of his actual performance. In the volume I have just quoted, Mr. Monkhouse makes a comparison between the two painters which

* "The Early English Water Colour Painters," p. 45.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GIRTIN

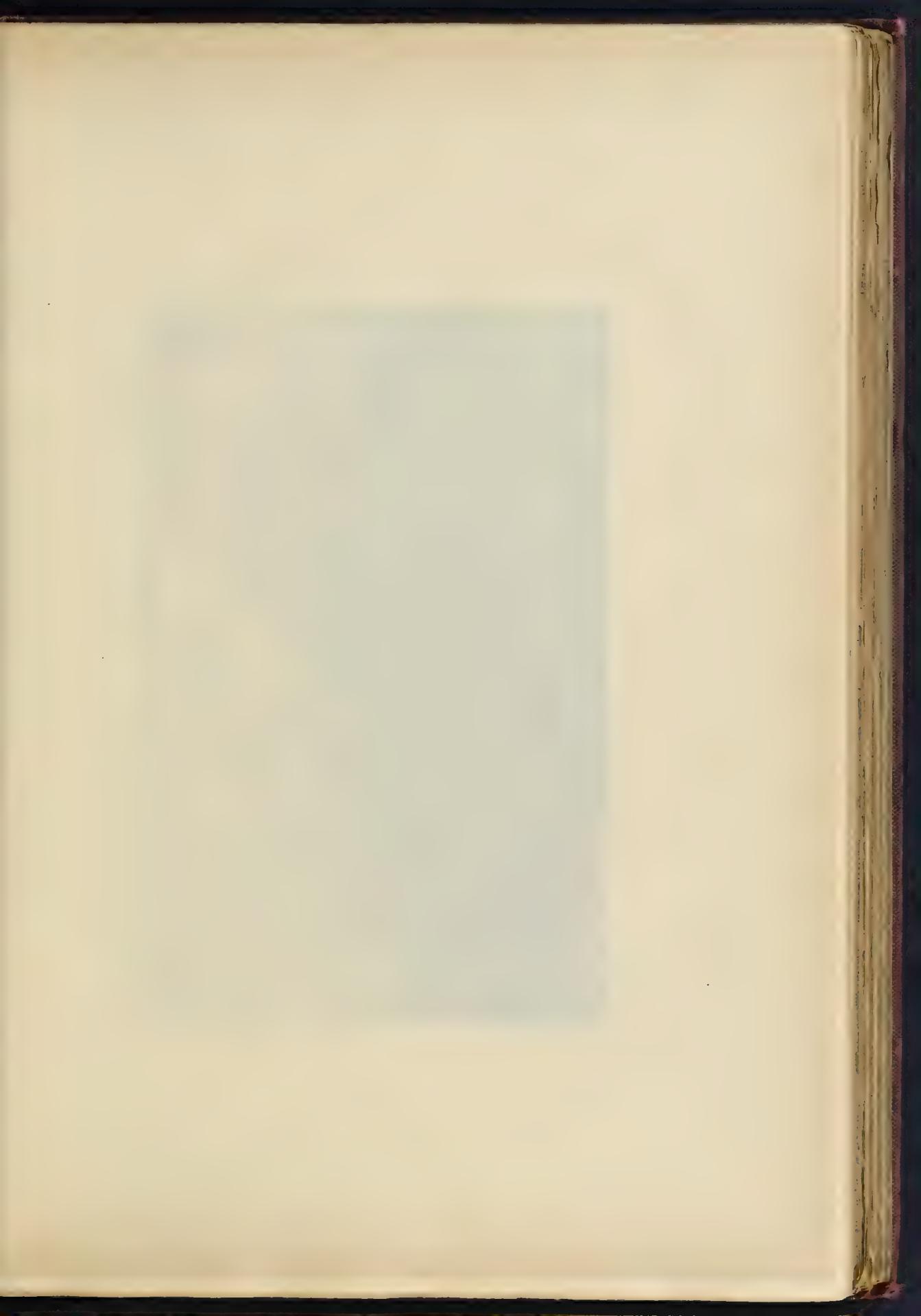
is, I think, unfair to Girtin. "His temper," he says, "was always calm and restful, careless for the most part as to choice of subject, but accepting it, whatever it was, as a thing whose nature and beauty were to be revealed, not, like Turner, as a thing to be treated, altered, and twisted till it assumed a beauty in accordance with his taste, and a shape which conveyed an extrinsic idea. He always surrendered himself to his subject, whether it was a landscape or a building. The quality of his poetry was expressive, not creative—he left creation to nature, and assumed the more humble *rôle* of interpreter. . . . If Girtin's imagination was, on the one hand, passive, receptive, expressive, Turner's was, on the other, active, restless, creative. . . . Girtin had turned topography into art, but his art was only nature at her best; whereas Turner's was a different thing from nature altogether, not only prose turned into poetry, but translated into another language."* Here, I submit, we have a comparison based on such a false foundation that it leads to a conclusion diametrically opposed to the truth. Girtin accepted the facts of any scene before which he planted his easel *because* his aim was art, and not topography. He understood how, by treatment often so unobtrusive that only the artist would recognise its presence, he could be at once faithful and creative. He could take the simplest scene—a few yards of river bank, with trees against the sky above it, as in the South Kensington "View on the Wharfe," for example—and make it a creation, in the true artistic sense, by pure unity of vision. Turner, in his early years, had little or no perception of this. He could not have made this "Wharfe" drawing, had it been to save his life. He did not trust art, because he was not yet an artist. His way of making a scene more interesting than he found it was to exaggerate the objective beauties he saw there and to bring in others from outside. The notion that the required charm could be given by design, by chiaroscuro, by the music of touch, was not realized by him until a

* "The Early English Water Colour Painters," p. 55.

TURNER

comparatively late period of his career, and never in his whole life did he grasp it with the vigorous faith of Girtin. Turner was very far indeed from being topographically faithful. It has been demonstrated often enough how ready he was to disregard the facts he had before him, and to paint scenes as he thought they ought to be rather than as they were. But his changes were inspired, not by Girtin's desire to justify his work by art, but by the wish to increase the objective beauty of his subjects. From any given scene Girtin selected such elements as made for congruity of impression, neglecting the rest, and so controlling the march of his brush that the unity thus won by selection should be enhanced by sympathetic handling—by a handling in which the size, form, and direction of every touch should contribute its quota towards the final harmony. Turner proceeded differently. His idea was not to reduce a scene to æsthetic unity, but to inflate it into objective sublimity. He aimed, not at a new creation justified by art alone, but at the glorification of the fact existing. One consequence of this difference in aim is that Girtin never forces his material, never attempts to make it do more than it can do well, never causes us to lose our interest in it and our wonder at its capacities; while Turner continually does all these things. The fibre, as it were, of a Girtin is in harmony with the art it carries, while that of a Turner is too often strained and tortured, not to be looked too closely into.

Here, before I go any farther, it may be as well to explain what I understand by the term "creation" as applied to a work of art. Such an explanation is by no means superfluous, seeing how the word has been used by more than one writer on Turner. But before we can define "creation," we must define "art" itself, or at least hint at a definition. Ruskin's teaching, so far as I understand it, comes to this: that art lies in the comprehension, reproduction, and illustration of pre-existing beauty, and that the greatest artist is therefore he who studies Nature with the profoundest humility, who reproduces her with the

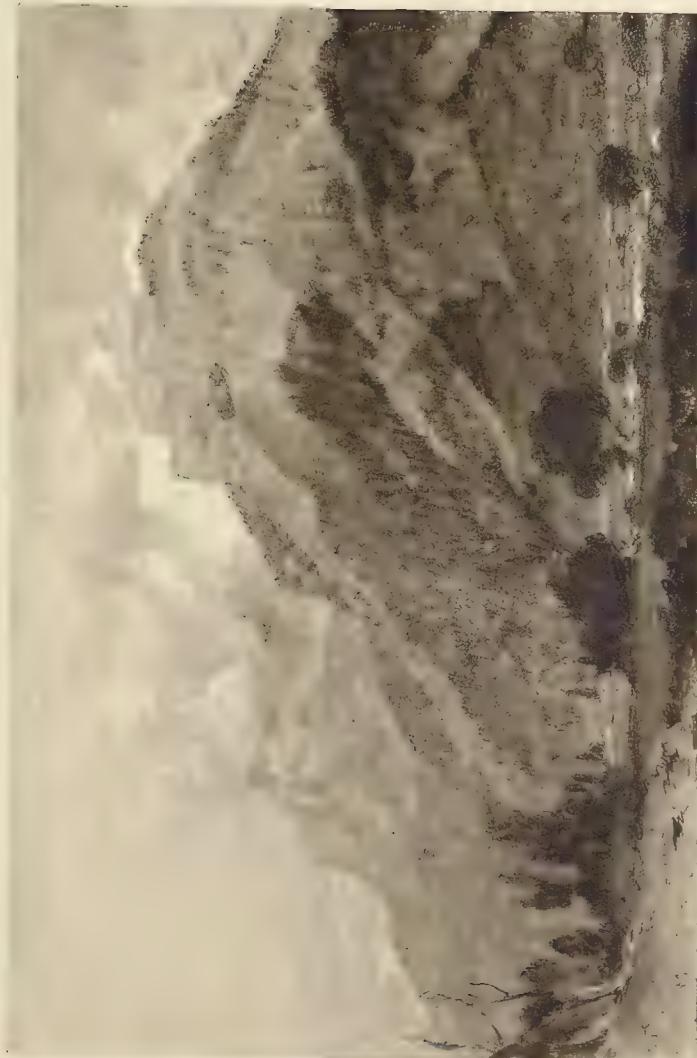


MONT BLANC.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(12 184)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



CREATION IN ART

most unerring fidelity, who illustrates her with the greatest resource. That educated people may be induced to accept such a description by a great writer the career of John Ruskin proves. And yet it is obviously no description of art at all, but merely a theory as to the ultimate, external purpose to which painters, sculptors, and perhaps architects, should devote their art. A definition of art itself must be founded on some quality, some element, running through all works of art, and through nothing else. Is there such an element?

That question may be best answered by another—Has beauty a cause? Is it a mere question of association, or is there some deep principle underlying all those combinations of phenomena which seem to us beautiful? I have made my confession in detail elsewhere,* so that here I need only say that beauty seems to me to be fitness and purpose expressed with the help of an intrinsic relation between our senses and the phenomena perceptible by them. In the case of the one art into which extraneous matters do not import confusion—I mean, of course, the art of Music—we all accept the existence of this intrinsic relation and allow that upon it rests our capacity for being moved. In some arts, and especially in that of Painting, the intrinsic element is so complicated with the accidental and too readily comprehensible feature of imitation, that most of us never get beyond the ideas connected with the latter, but fasten upon some part of them as containing the whole secret of art. So far has this gone that even great artists have been found to assert that art is imitation, and the best work of art the one which comes nearest to producing illusion, and this in spite of the fact that the great majority of the arts have nothing even incidentally to do with the production of illusion at all.

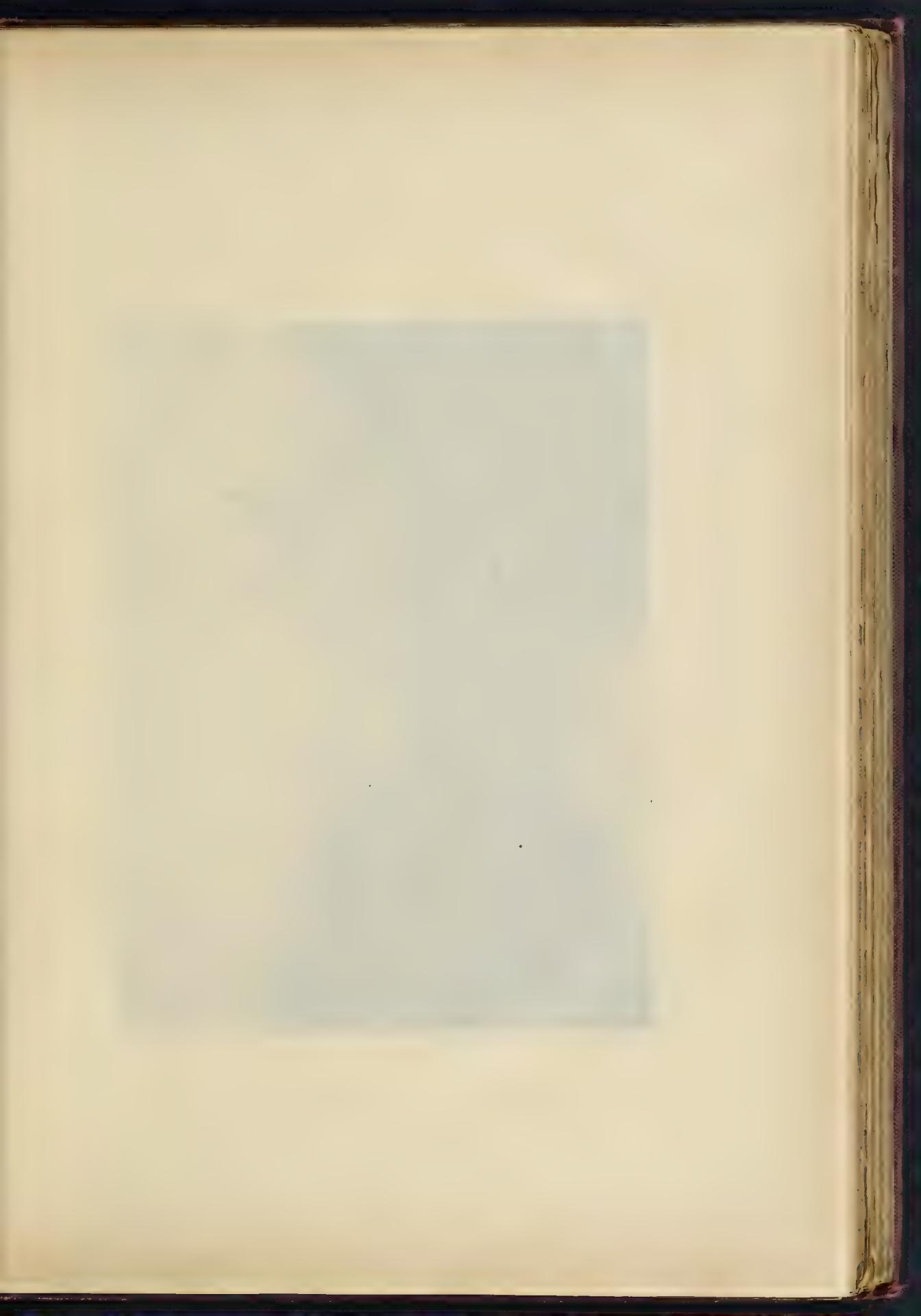
To return to my definition: Art of all kinds depends on the creation, not on the reproduction, of beauty. The artist's business is to understand, or at least to perceive, the laws upon which Nature works,

* Introduction to "Gainsborough, and his Place in English Art."

TURNER

and to put those laws into action on his own account, so that he may add to and not merely duplicate the world's stock of beauty. He must imitate the conduct of Nature, not her products. His imitation of the latter is not an end, but a means ; and even as a means it occupies but a small place in the sum-total of artistic activities. The revelation of beauty has been sometimes suggested as a sufficient description of art. In a certain sense, no doubt, a Beethoven sonata, or the interior of Westminster Abbey, may be described as revelations of the beauty latent in a piano, or in Portland stone ; but unless we abolish the word create altogether—or restrict it to things made out of nothing, which comes to the same thing—it is reasonable to apply it to works of the human imagination. To reveal beauty is an ambiguous phrase. You may do that by drawing back a curtain. To create beauty, to combine elements into a new whole, intimately fused and only to be judged by itself, describes, if it does not logically define, the aim of all true art.

By creation, then, I mean the use of the intrinsic power over our senses which lies in the final elements of art—in Painting, these elements are line, colour, tone, and handling—to give coherence, unity, and, as it were, organic existence to a picture, statue, or other work of art ; to make it impossible to suppose that any part of it came by accident ; or that, as a whole, it was anything whatever but a declaration of passions and desires really and truly felt by its maker. Artistic creation is quite distinct, then, from objective invention. It need not imply invention in the ordinary sense of the word at all, but may consist entirely in that work of selection, control, and accent which is enough by itself to give inevitableness and unity to any product of the human mind. I may illustrate what I mean by referring to a fine Holbein, such as the “*Sieur de Morette*”—if that be its right name—at Dresden. Here we have an artistic creation entirely depending for its unity on control, on the unerring way in which part answers to



KILGARRAN CASTLE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(36 - 48)

In the Collection of
H. L. BISCHOFFSHEIM



HIS ACQUISITIVENESS

part, and one detail of treatment is implied by another, so that we are left with the conviction that the picture was seen, as a whole, by a single effort of the painter's mind before a touch was put upon the panel. Incidentally, no doubt, the portrait bears witness to the inventiveness of Holbein, for he surely designed the beautiful dagger slung at Morette's waist. But that fact, which we only know through external evidence, does not affect the artistic merit of the work or make it more creative from the pictorial standpoint than if the dagger had been copied. It only enables us to say that Holbein was a good designer of metal-work as well as a fine painter.

As a creator, then, as the presenter of a concrete idea, as a painter trusting entirely to the intrinsic powers of his art, Girtin deserves a place above the Turner of his own time. Turner saw this clearly enough and trembled for what the future might have in store. He profited by Girtin's example, but many years had to pass before his own work reached the unity and breadth of his early rival. To put it thus, however, is not quite fair to Turner; for it would be absurd to pretend that he entirely adopted Girtin's ideals or aimed at identical results. His mind in youth was essentially acquisitive. He admired Girtin's coherence, breadth, and repose; he aimed in turn at the golden atmosphere of Cuyp, at the sonorous colour and sensuous shapes of Titian, at the gradation of Claude—in fact, he was governed till late in youth by the spirit which made him, one varnishing day, carry off a knife-load of some brilliant pigment from a brother artist's palette. The fifteen years which elapsed between his first definite indication of the purpose for which nature had made him, and the real inauguration of his career, were spent in a more industrious exploration of the *terrain* than any painter had undertaken since the days of Leonardo. He tried all kinds of ideas, and measured himself against all the artists whose fame he found in the mouths of those about him. Had he been as determined to master the technique of the oil medium as he

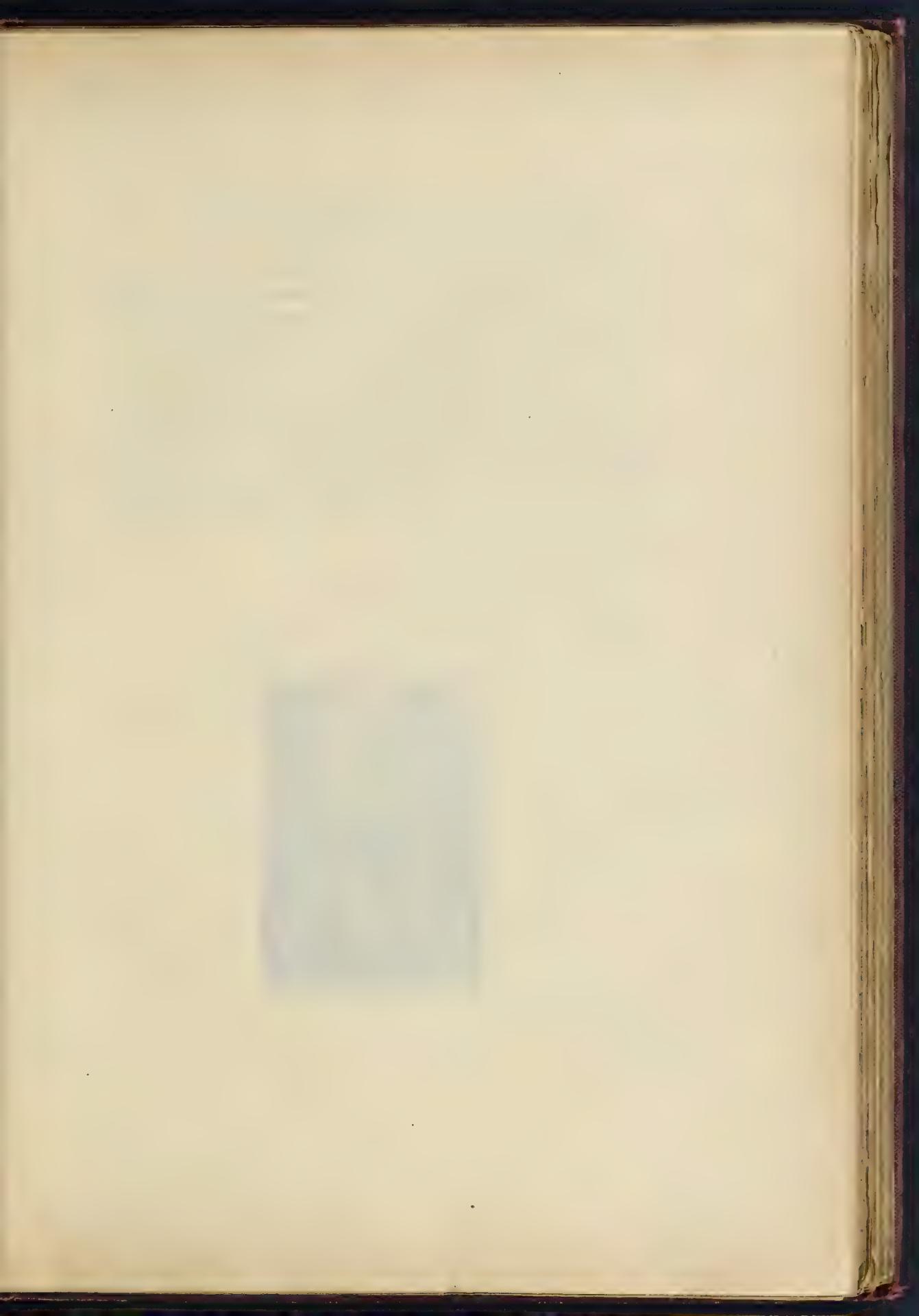
TURNER

was to prove himself the intellectual superior of the famous artists who had brought it to perfection, his own ambitions might have been more completely fulfilled.

How differently he behaved towards the technique of water-colour! One of the strangest things in his career is the contrast between his determination to explore the capabilities and extend the field of the one material, and his readiness to take the other for granted and use it in a sort of blind trust. If Turner had been the first man to employ water-colour, he could scarcely have been more careful to make good every step in his progress. From those primitive drawings, in which one or two simple pigments are used merely to hint, as it were, that nature is not all black and white, down to the gorgeous dreams in which his development closed, his invention never sleeps. Turner's stages are continuous. He makes no adventurous bounds, but, like an Alpine climber, he cuts secure steps before committing himself to a further advance. It is at least arguable that every secret, every trick and contrivance known to the water-colour painter, was discovered by Turner. Some, of course, were known before his time, but these he re-discovered and used with a skill far beyond that of their first inventors. His dexterity was equal to his ingenuity. We cannot say of him, as we can of so many pioneers, that he pointed to the goal but could not reach it himself. He not only devised methods, he used them so consummately that in some cases we are disputing still as to whether he used them at all!* He could lay a wash and paint into it in such a fashion that a good eye may be deceived into thinking it not a wash, but tinted paper.† He could use the rag and the knife with similar *finesse*, and I have heard proficient water-colour

* In this connection the reader may be referred to a strange story told by the late W. J. Stillman in his "Autobiography of a Journalist," vol. i., p. 162.

† Those Rhine drawings once at Farnley are an instance of this. It often used to be asserted that they were on grey paper.



MALMESBURY ABBEY.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

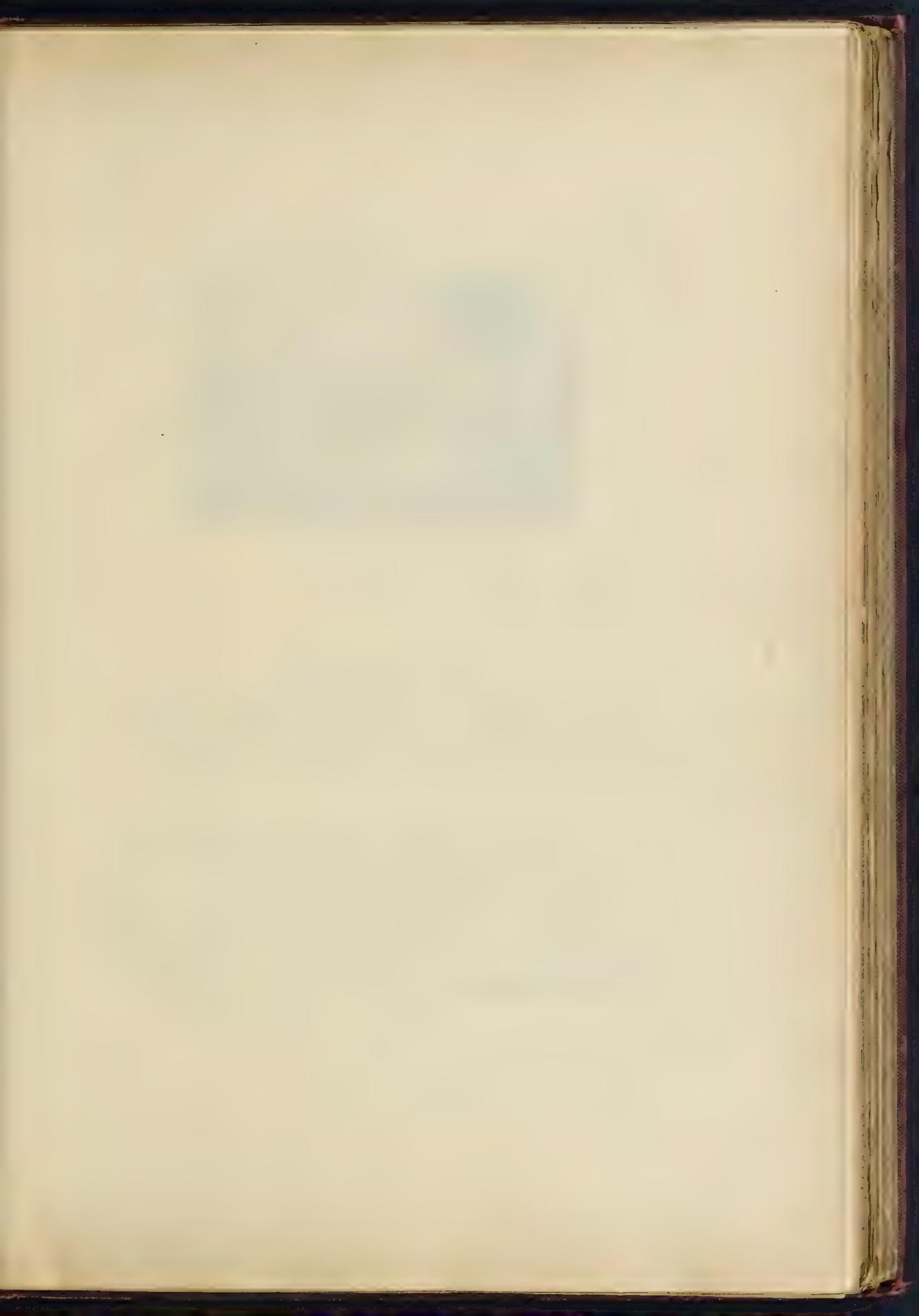
(21 15)

In the Collection of
HERBERT A. DAY, Esq.

HIS MASTERY OF WATER COLOUR

painters contradict each other flatly on the question whether certain effects of his were obtained with body-colour or the sponge. Now and then, no doubt, especially in the Rivers-of-France drawings, he forced his effects and showed a characteristic want of tenderness for his material. But on the whole he makes it clear that he loved water-colour for its own sake as he never loved oil. He nursed it, dexterously behandled it, watched its symptoms and corrected its weaknesses, like a mother with her child, until at last he moulded it into the finest possible instrument for the use to which he put it, an instrument having, indeed, no defect but that curse of mortality which it shares with us all.





LINLITHGOW PALACE.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER R.A.

69 101

In the Collection of
THOMAS BROCKLEBANK, Esq.



CHAPTER III.

Commencement of Turner's Real Career—Drawings of Norham and Pembroke Castles—Influence of Wilson and the Dutchmen—“Calais Pier”—“Vintage of Macon”—“The Shipwreck”—Quality of his Imagination—His Domestic Arrangements—Pictures of English ‘Great Houses’—Tours on the Rhine and in Italy.

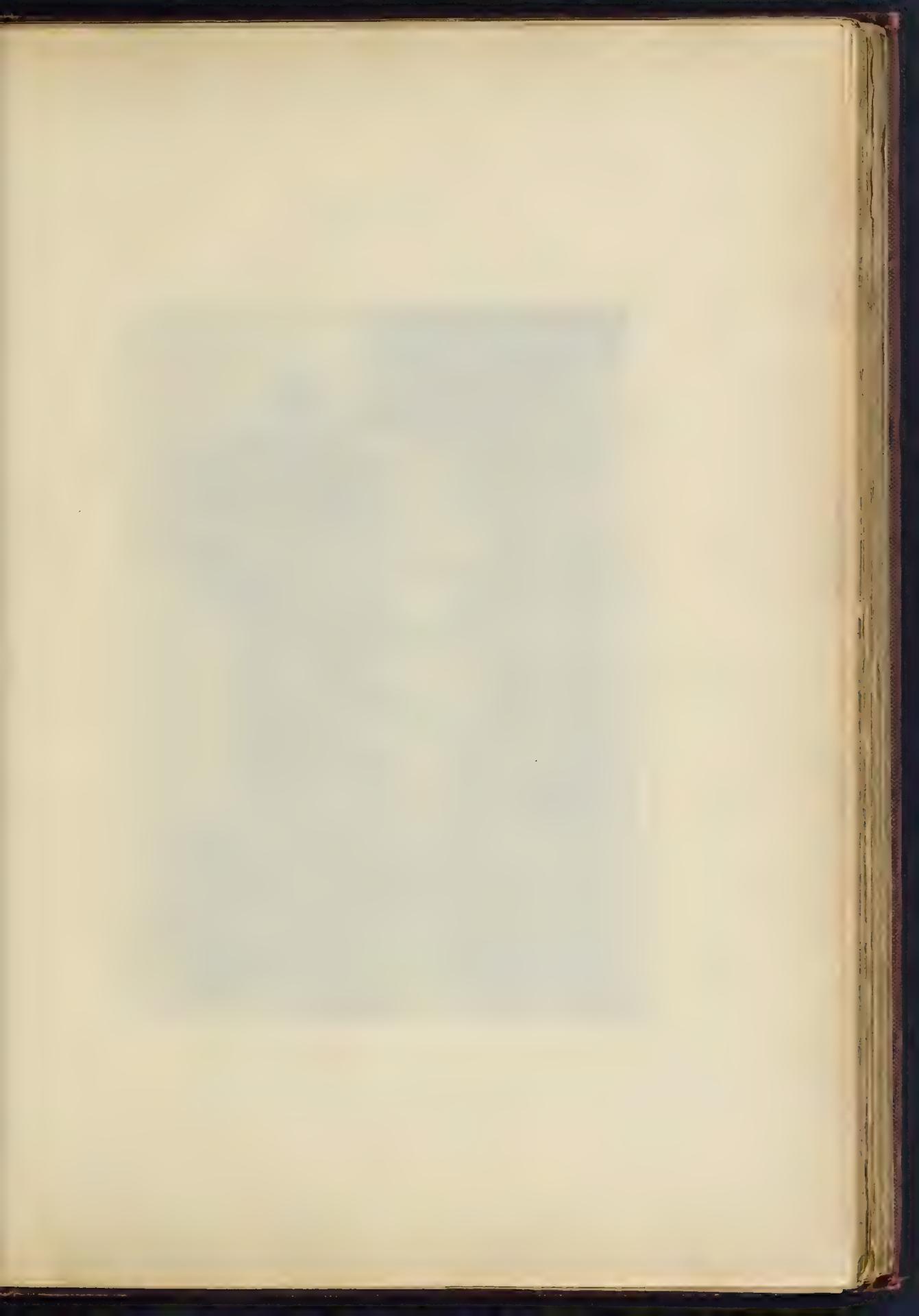
THE beginning of Turner's real career is usually put down to 1800, but the way of seeing things and the method of work which were to be his down to the end of his eclectic period, seldom found stronger expression than in the pictures exhibited at the Royal Academy two years earlier. In 1797, moved, perhaps, to a new spurt of emulation by Girtin's superb drawings of Yorkshire scenery, he had started on his first visit to the North. During this tour he had wandered through the Lake district, through Cumberland,

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Northumberland, Durham, and part of Yorkshire; he had made the acquaintance of Dr. Whitaker, for whom he was afterwards to do so much, and had, perhaps, paid his first visit to that "Farnley Hall, near the market-town of Otley, in the West Riding of the county of York," which was to fill so large a place in his life. A few months later he sent to the Academy of 1798 several pictures and drawings which more than foreshadowed the style of his first maturity. Among these were the famous "Norham Castle, on the Tweed—Summer's Morn,"* "Morning among the Coniston Fells, Cumberland,"† "Dunstanborough Castle—Sunrise after a squally Night,"‡ "Holy Island Cathedral," "The Refectory of Kirkstall Abbey, Yorkshire," "Winesdale (*sic*), Yorkshire—an Autumnal Morning," and four other subjects from north of the Humber. The story has been told by all Turner's biographers how, during his visit to Scotland in 1818, he one day found himself walking with Cadell, the publisher, on the Tweed, opposite Norham, and how, when a turn in the path brought them face to face with the majestic ruin, Turner bowed and doffed his hat, explaining that Norham had made his fortune, through the drawing he sent to the Exhibition of 1798. All these productions of 1798 are intensely characteristic, and may, in my opinion, be accepted as marking the birth of Turner's imagination no less clearly than his work of two years later. The "Norham" especially is a most ingenious essay in balance. The influence of Girtin is still to be traced in the breadth of the four alternating planes into which the tone scheme is arranged; but Turner's own idiosyncrasy is responsible for the elaborate way in which the details echo and corroborate each other, for the subtly masked curves which lead the eye into the centre without stirring it to rebellion, and, of course, for that insistence on history and hope as well as on present fact,

* Now in the possession of Laundy Walters, Esq. (See Plate). Mrs. Thwaites has a similar drawing.

† In the National Gallery. ‡ Given by the Duke of Westminster to the Melbourne Gallery.



CLAPHAM COMMON.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(12 x 17)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



EARLY PICTURES

which seems to have been one of his most unfailing pre-occupations. The drawing is without the simplicity of concentration, the masterful command to see what the painter saw and nothing else, which it would have had at the hands of Girtin. Turner accepts accident and does his best to digest it, failing a little here and there, with the ugly contour of the river bank on our right, for instance; as yet he does not sweep it aside and replace it, as he will do twenty years later, with details scarcely more relevant but vastly more amusing of his own invention. The pressure of Girtin is again shown in the "Dunstanborough." Here we have concentration of the deliberate and contrast of the slightly melodramatic kind, carried almost to violence in the search for breadth, force, and perhaps a moral.

Down to 1802, the year of Girtin's death, the main influences which shared with him the work of forming Turner were those of Reynolds and Wilson. Sir Joshua had so much in common with the Welsh landscape-painter that a young artist could find himself on both without any risk of embracing discordant elements. Both were enamoured of fat textures, of a rich, crumby impasto, of low tones and of the shadow that seems to tempt exploration with the outstretched hand. In the "Kilgarran Castle" of 1799 (see Plate), the combination of Turner's various exemplars is carried to the farthest point. Colour, texture, and even handling all betray an eye fed on Wilson, while the vigour of the *chiaroscuro*, the determination to win unity at no matter what cost to light, rests lightly on Girtin. In this much discussed picture Turner shows a command of his material upon which he seldom improved. Later in life he was to use the other end of his palette with equal skill and more audacity, but he seldom contrived to sink tone so low without loss of atmosphere. Imagine what the "Calais Pier" would be, for instance, if the storm sky against which the sail of the incoming packet is relieved were as transparent in its gloom as

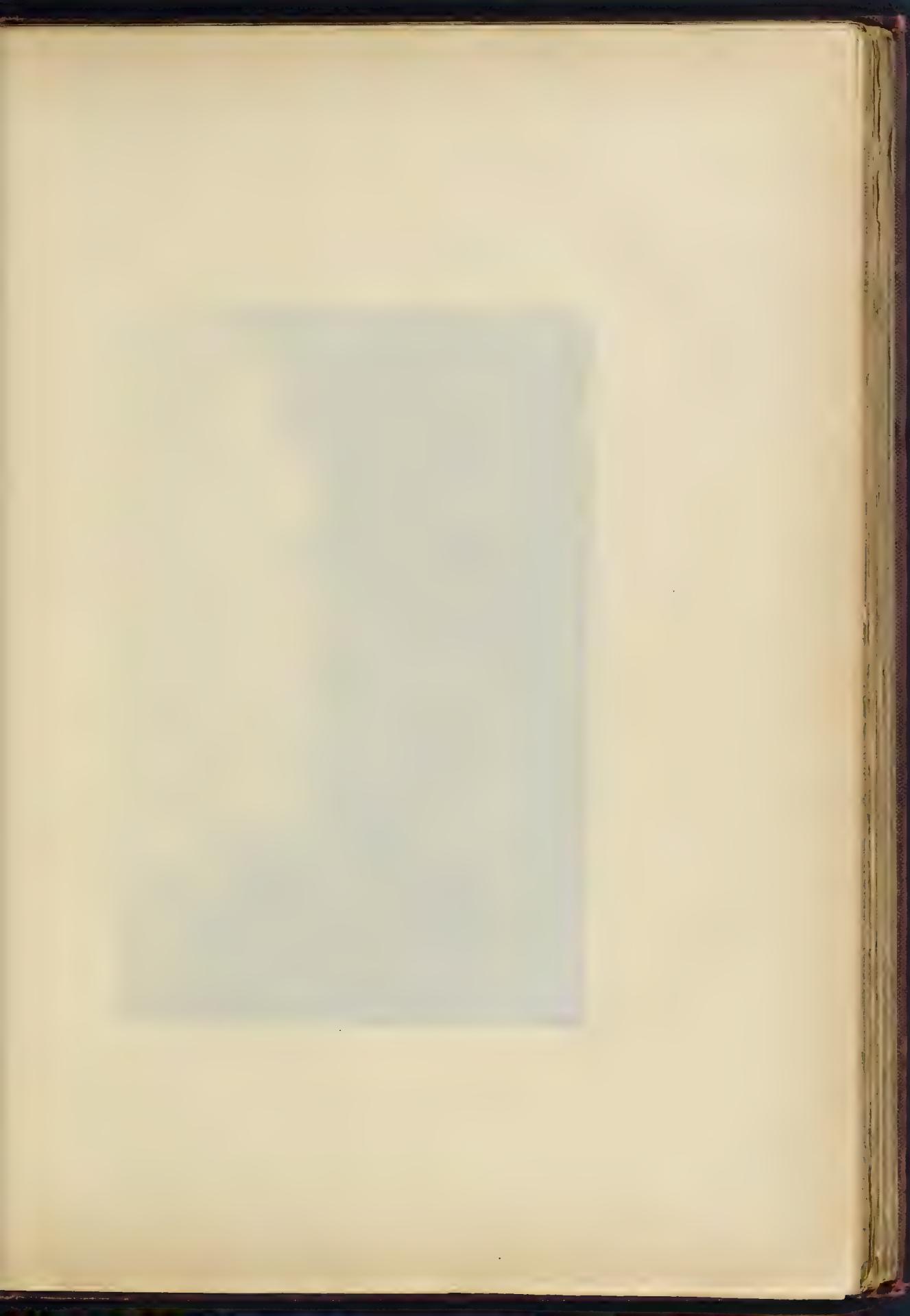
TURNER

the shadows of the "Kilgarran Castle," and you will have to confess that in some ways Turner made better use of English than of Dutch examples. In a picture painted a year or two later than the "Kilgarran"—I mean the "Dolbadern," which he gave to the Academy on his election as an R.A. in 1802—much the same kind of effect is aimed at, but with less success. The glazes are there managed with inferior skill, with the result that the shadows are at once more inscrutable and less mysterious.

To the Academy of 1799, Turner sent a "Harlech Castle," the fine drawing of "Warkworth," now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the "Battle of the Nile," his first naval picture. These things, added to what he had previously done, earned him his election as an A.R.A.*

In 1800 he exhibited the "Dolbadern," already mentioned, a "Carnarvon," and three views of Fonthill, in water colours, and his "Fifth Plague of Egypt," the Plague of Fire, which he was afterwards to make use of for one of the least successful of his *Liber* Plates. It is a strange combination of *naïveté* in the imaginative parts, with vigour in those which depend on memory and experience. The thunder-storm—for so, in appearance, it is—is well, the Egypt, with its Pyramids and an unauthorized pylon, extremely ill, done. The Pyramids look like tents. Another Old Testament subject followed in 1801, and a third in 1802. These were "The Army of the Medes destroyed by a Whirlwind," and the "Tenth Plague of Egypt," the latter also used for the *Liber*. Mr. Ruskin seems to have had these three pictures in his eye when he declared that during Turner's "first period" (1800–1810) his mind was fixed on the Law of the Old Testament. Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse, naturally enough, calls this an astonishing statement, and declares that there is no proof that he ever in his life gave a thought to the Law of

* Turner marked his promotion by moving westwards from the humble neighbourhood of Maiden Lane. He took a studio, at least, at 64, Harley Street. In 1801, 1802, and 1803 his address in the Academy catalogues is 75, Norton Street, Portland Road. In 1804 he returned to 64, Harley Street.



BONNEVILLE, SAVOY.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(121—181)

In the Collection of
THE REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE.



EARLY PICTURES

the Old Testament. That he founded pictures on some of the more dramatic events of Jewish history is a very different matter, and is probably to be explained by the simple fact that in the rotation of his rivalries he, at about this time, found himself confronted by the works of Nicolas Poussin and his disciple Gaspar. It is certainly a significant fact that, early in this very year, 1802, Buchanan, the picture importer, had exhibited in London Nicolas Poussin's "Plague at Ashdod," between which and Turner's plague pictures the affinities are striking.*

A most interesting and excellent production of about this time is here reproduced, in "Clapham Common." It is small, little more than a *pochade*, and looks as if it had been done off-hand. And yet in some ways it is curiously elaborate. The pattern made by the trees has been most carefully established, while the shape of the piece of sky, bounded above by the leafage of the near clump and below by the sky-line of the distant wood, has been arrived at by much revision. The scheme as a whole points to thought of Hobbema; the colour and handling to study of Wilson, Morland, or Hoppner.† It is a brilliant little sketch, and is notable, moreover, as an instance of what so many writers on Turner have pointed out, namely the care with which he preserved an idea for future use. *Mutatis mutandis*, the pattern here elaborated is practically the same as that in the *Liber* plate known as "Hindoo Devotions." The date of this little canvas is given in the National Gallery Catalogue as 1802. At this time Turner's evolution was anything but continuous. His "Norham" was

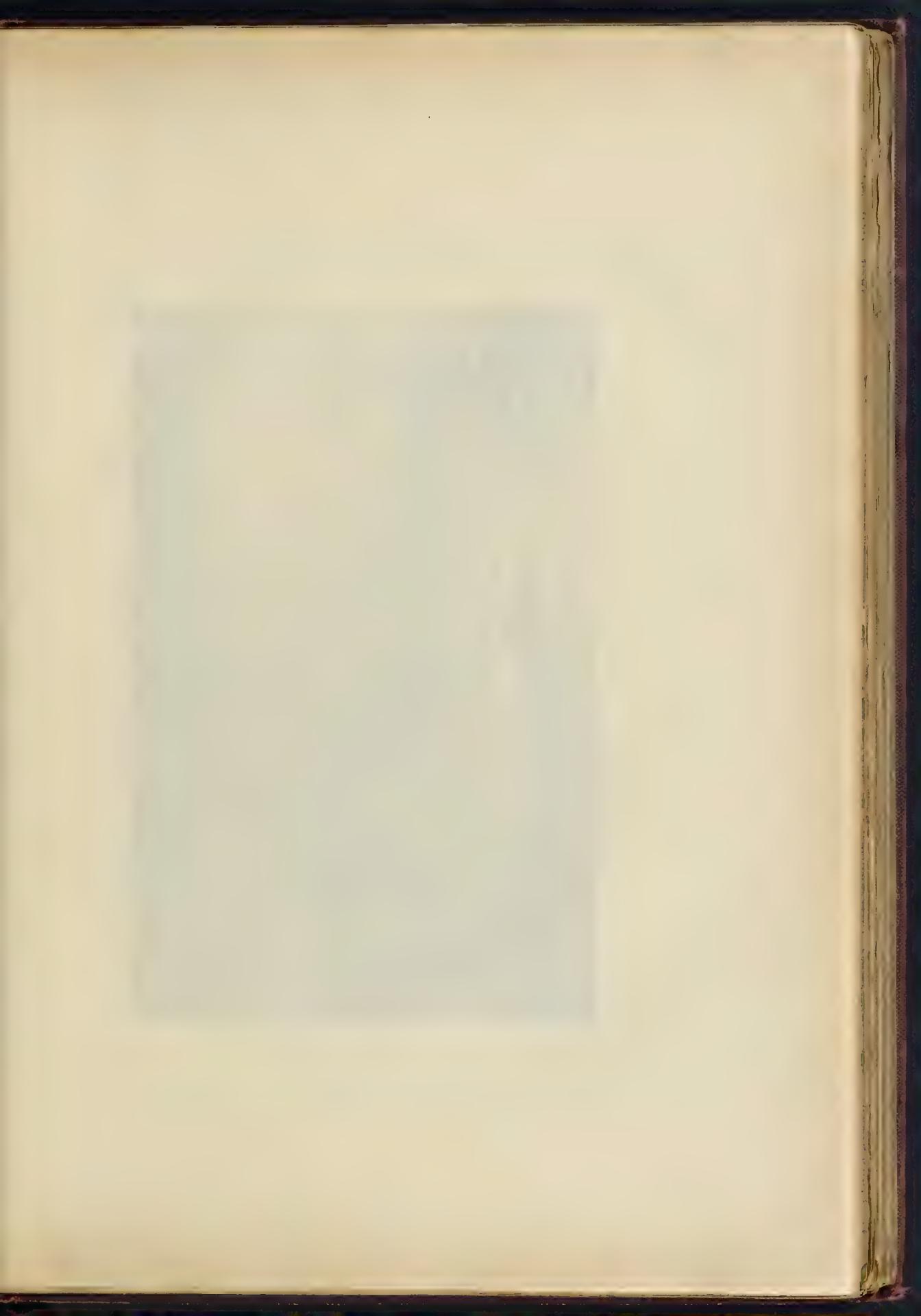
* Irvine, Buchanan's agent, had extracted the Poussin from the Colonna Gallery in Rome, the previous autumn. The picture was afterwards sold to the Duke of Northumberland, who presented it to the National Gallery in 1838. Another and finer example of the same composition is in the Louvre.

† If Hoppner had devoted himself more to landscape, he would probably have taken his place with Wilson and Gainsborough at the head of the landscape-painters of the eighteenth century. His drawings rival those of Gainsborough, while his backgrounds to portraits often show more of the true spirit of landscape than those of Reynolds.

TURNER

in the Exhibition in 1798, his "Pembroke Castle, South Wales—Thunder-storm approaching" (see Plate), in that of 1801. And yet, judging from the technical evidence, which is usually the safest in such a question, this "Pembroke" might be put before the "Norham." The truth seems to be that, in the continual veerings about due to his eclectic methods, the later drawing represents a moment when he was thinking of the Dutchmen, the various "Van-somethings and Back-somethings who have libelled the sea," rather than of the more imaginative qualities of Wilson and Girtin. Compared with the "Norham," the "Pembroke" is hard, over-definite, and airless. As a design, however, it shows Turner's early manner at its best, especially in the sky, which is a masterpiece of pictorial arrangement as well as of fidelity to natural fact.

Turner had possibly first set foot in Scotland in 1797, when he made his drawing of Norham; but his serious dealings with that country began only in 1801. In the autumn of that year he made one of those wide casts of his net which are so characteristic, embracing points then so far apart as Edinburgh and Loch Awe. He seems to have prepared himself for the journey by dipping into 'Ossian,' with whose poetry his own has often such an amusing affinity. "Ben Lomond Mountain, Scotland: The Traveller—*vide* Ossian's 'War of Caros,'" is one of the titles in the 1802 catalogue. The other Scottish scenes are the "Falls of Clyde, Lanarkshire: Noon—*vide* Akenside's 'Hymn to the Naiads'" ; "Kilchern Castle, with the Cruchan Ben Mountains, Scotland: Noon" ; and "Edinburgh New Town, Castle, etc., from the Water of Leith." One of the most curious instances of Turner's explorations of other artists' styles is given by the drawing of Edinburgh. We can understand his inquiries into the methods of Wilson or Claude; but why should his pugnacity be stirred by such a painter as Alexander Nasmyth? And yet before this "Edinburgh, from the Water of Leith," we cannot doubt that Turner's intention was to show that he could beat Nasmyth

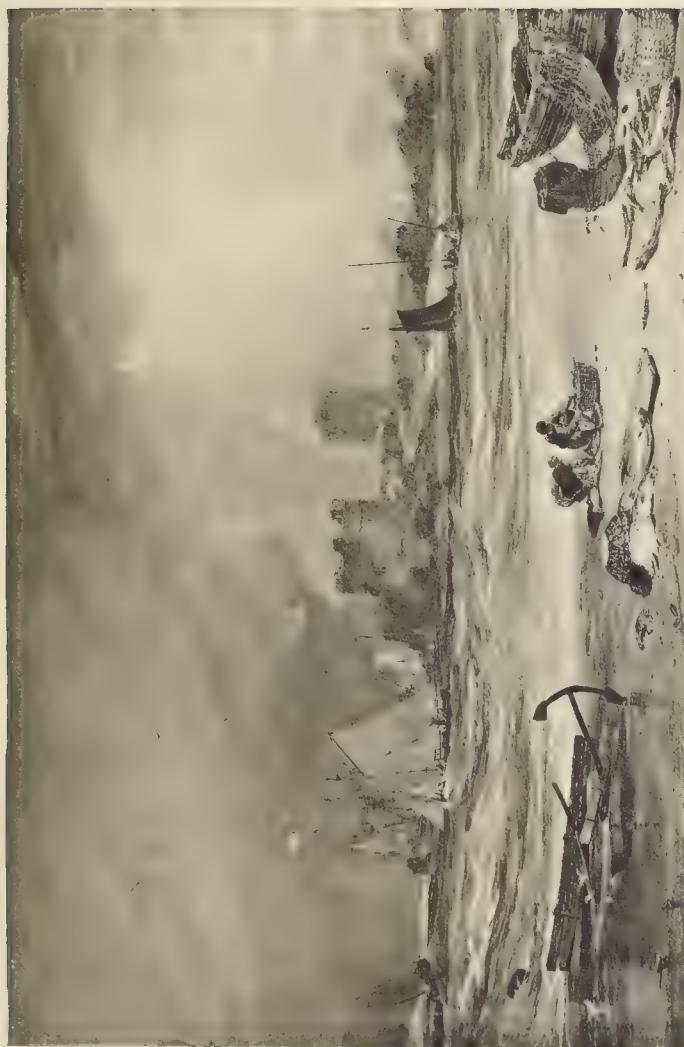


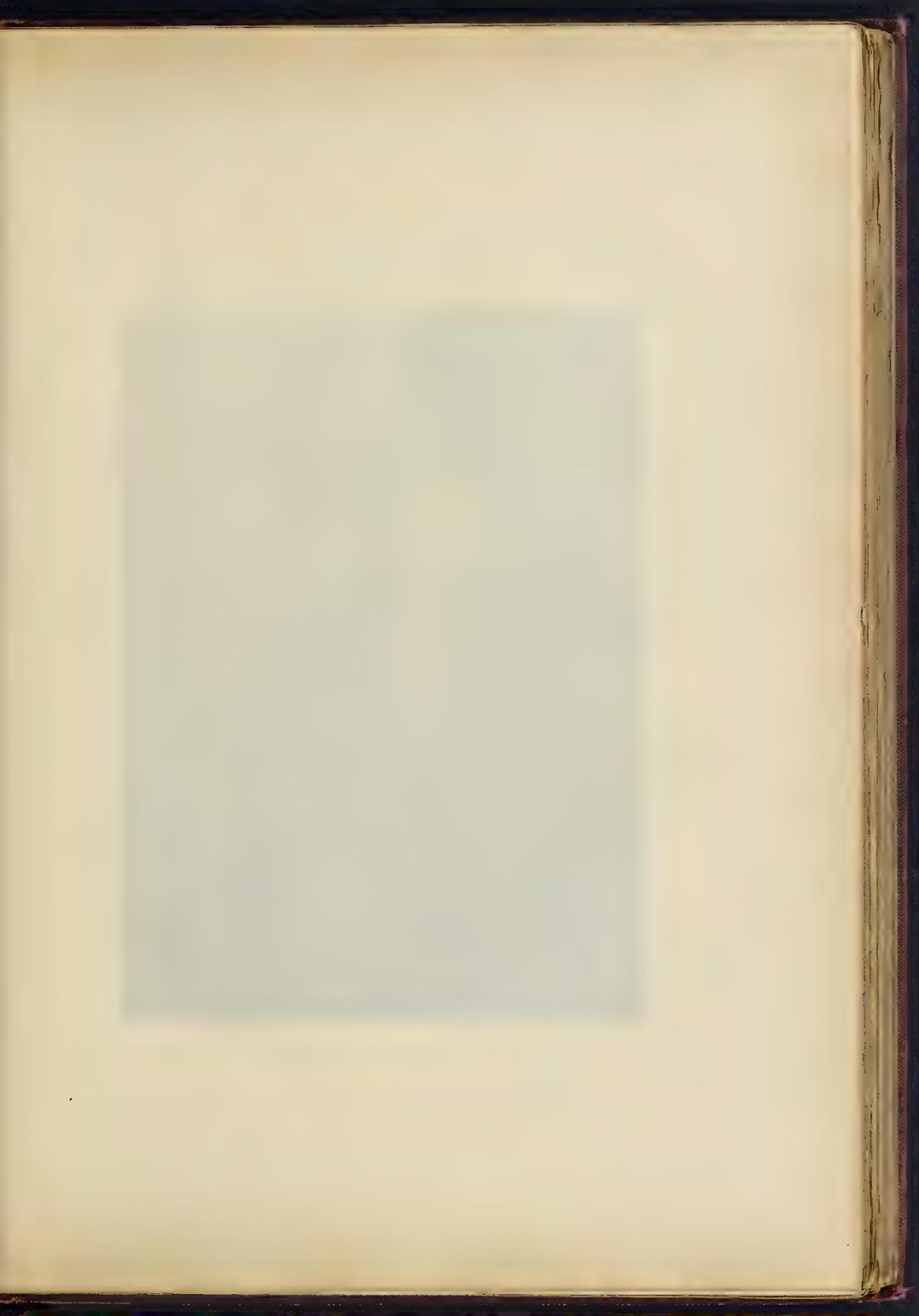
PEMBROKE CASTLE.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

27 41

In the Collection of
RALPH BROCKLEBANK, Esq.





FISHERMEN ON A LEE SHORE: SQUALLY WEATHER.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(35 48)

In the Collection of
LORD IVEAGH.



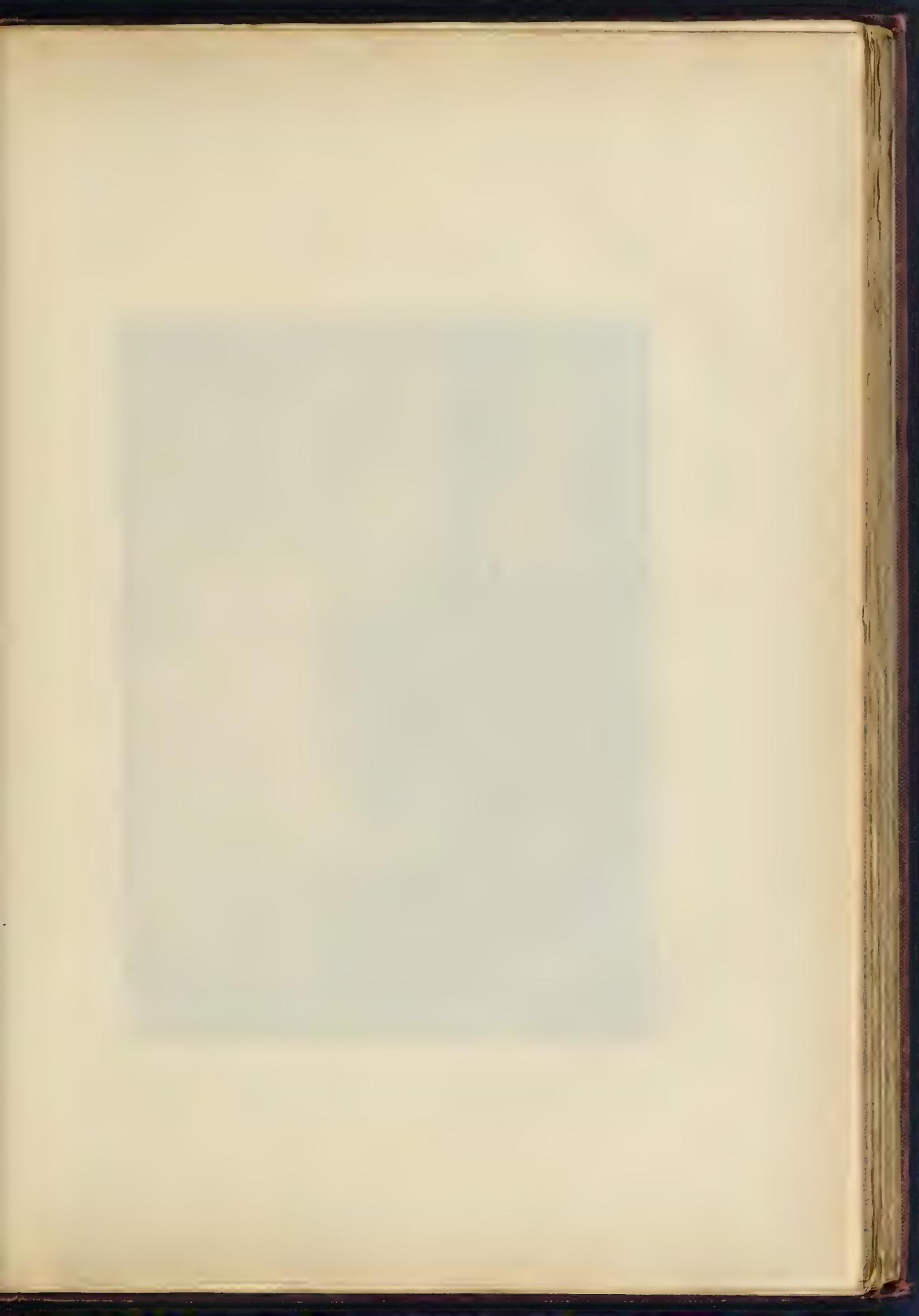
FIRST CONTINENTAL JOURNEY

at his own game. The variations from the normal Turner of the time are all in Nasmyth's direction. Composition, colour, handling, and effect—all these have a leaven of the Scottish master, as if Turner's very thoughts were affected by the attraction of proximity.

In 1802 Turner followed up his visit to the North by one to the South. Taking advantage, like so many others, of the Peace of Amiens, he crossed the Channel and penetrated as far into the Alps as what he—or the Academy printer—calls the “Valley of d'Aoust.” He was fascinated by the scenery about Bonneville and Chamonix, and the drawings he brought back seem to me the most purely artistic things he had yet produced. He forgot for the time those impertinent recollections of other men which had so long beset him, and allowed the emotions stirred by a new aspect of nature to have their own way with his brush. In such things as the “Bonneville” which belonged to Mr. Ruskin, or the closer and more spontaneous sketch in the collection of Mr. Stopford Brooke (see Plate), we find a more undiluted Turner than we have yet encountered. If he had never again countermarched or stepped aside, we should have been able to say that he had found himself during his visit to the Continent in 1802. Unfortunately things passed otherwise, and many years were yet to elapse before he finally settled down to his own line in the race for fame. In the same Exhibition with his “Bonneville, Savoy, with Mont Blanc,” his “Chateau de St. Michel,” and his “Source of the Arveron,” appeared two of his frankest and, it must be confessed, most successful experiments with stolen thunder. These were “Calais Pier” and the “Festival on the Opening of the Vintage of Macon.” The appearance of these two pictures in the same Exhibition with a “Holy Family” and the landscapes from the foot of Mont Blanc showed extraordinary versatility; but they also proved that Turner did not then really and fully appreciate the art against which he was pitting himself.

TURNER

The “Vintage of Macon” is conceived on the lines of Claude ; the “Calais Pier” on those followed by the whole group of Dutch sea-painters of the seventeenth century, Jakob Ruisdael, Willem van de Velde, Bakhuisen, and the rest. Unfortunately Turner neglects, or rather ignores, one of the main pictorial qualities on which Claude, Ruisdael, and Van de Velde depended for their charm. The “Vintage of Macon” is finer in design than an average Claude ; the winding river, the groups of trees, the bridge, the crowds of figures, the roll of the distant landscape, are better understood and employed to better effect than was usual with the Franco-Italian. So also with the “Calais Pier.” No Dutchman ever painted anything which could live beside it, so far as vigour of design, movement, and knowledge of the sea go. When we look, however, into the actual constitution of the pictures, into the quality of the crust of which they are composed, it is another matter. The Frenchman and the Dutchman took it as part of their business to make paint a beautiful thing, to lose it as paint and regain it as air and light. The best Van de Velde—such a thing as the “Calm” in the Wynn Ellis collection in the National Gallery — is a small affair beside a great Turner, but it shows a respect for material, a comprehension of the rights, if I may put it so, of the little heaps of pigment on the palette, unreach'd by the Englishman in 1803. Two years later Turner painted the “Shipwreck,” which now hangs as a pendant to the “Calais Pier” in the National Gallery. Splendid in design and unprecedented as a page from the drama of the sea, it has the same defect as its companion in the indifference, the want of tenderness, solicitude, and comprehension, with which the material is handled. Turner has failed to keep his shadows transparent and his sky luminous ; his thunder-clouds are solid, a ship could break her topmast against them ; while the surface of his sea looks capable of sustaining those iron manacles which he was in due time to set afloat upon it. And this applies to all the sea-pictures painted within a year



CONWAY CASTLE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(4) 55.

In the Collection of
THE DUKE OF WESTMINSTER.



SHEERNESS.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(40½ × 57½)

In the Collection of
LADY WANTAGE.



RUSKIN ON ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE

or two of 1803 ; "Fishermen on a lee Shore in squally Weather,"* painted about 1802 ; "Boats carrying out Anchors and Cables to Dutch Men-of-war," exhibited at the R.A. in 1804 ;† the "Sea-piece," of which there is a small sketch or replica in the Oxford University Galleries (see Plate);‡ the Duke of Westminster's "Conway Castle" (see Plate); and even to some extent to Lady Wantage's "Sheerness" (see Plate), painted as late as 1805. In all these Turner's attention is concentrated on the maritime drama. He thinks too little of his paint and canvas.

This Mr. Ruskin counts to him as a merit,§ thereby deciding off-hand the whole question of the artist's *v.* the layman's view of art. In his comparison of the old masters with the moderns as landscape painters, he says that "this infant school differed inherently from that ancienter one, in that its motive was love. However feeble its efforts might be, they were *for the sake of nature*, not of the picture, and therefore, having this germ of life, it grew and thrrove. Robson did not paint purple hills because he wanted to show how he could lay on purple ; but because he truly loved their dark peaks. Fielding did not paint downs to show how dexterously he could sponge out mists ; but because he loved downs.

"The modern school, therefore, became the only true school of landscape which has yet existed ; the artificial Claude and Gaspar work may be cast aside out of our way and from the last landscape of Tintoret, if we look for *life*, we must pass at once to the first of Turner."||

Now, the implication here is that a picture consists of objective truth and technical skill, with no third element between the two. It

* See Plate.

† In the possession of Mr. George Donaldson (see Plate).

‡ The large picture is in America (Widener Collection). The version bequeathed to the National Gallery by Mr. J. M. Parsons seems to me a copy, perhaps by the same hand as that "Kilgarran Castle" which was the subject of so much discussion at the Guildhall Exhibition in 1899.

§ "Modern Painters," Vol. III. p. 332 (Ed. 1888).

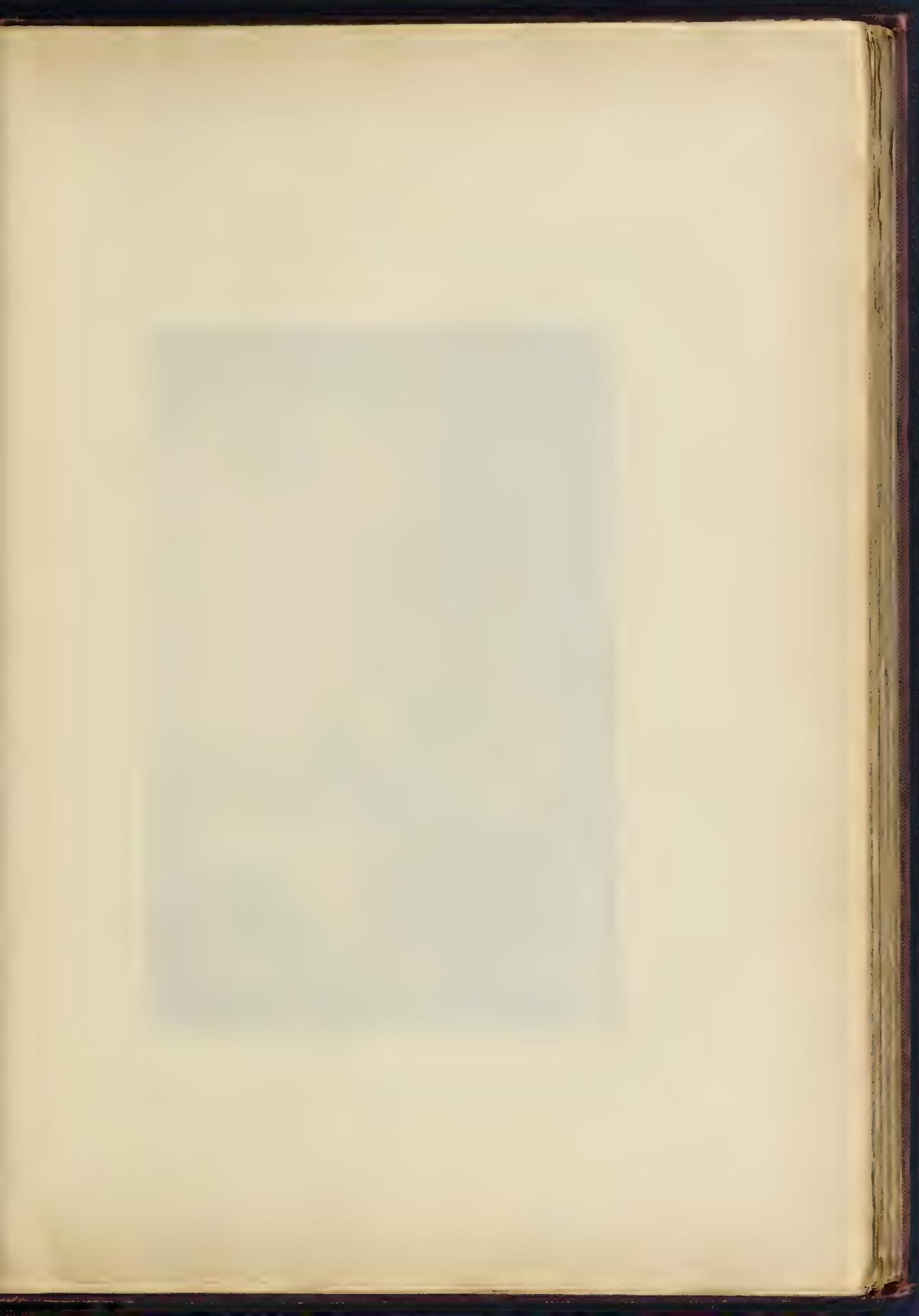
|| *Id., loc. cit.*

TURNER

ignores subjective æsthetic expression altogether, and gives not the slightest hint that its author was alive to the fact that a painter talks with paint, as a musician does with sound, and might paint purple hills neither because he loved them nor because he wished to show off his skill in laying purple washes, but because they gave him notes, both of form and colour, essential to the new creation he had in view. To the Ruskin of 1856, who thought there was no middle way between painting a thing for the love of it and painting it for the sake of exhibiting technical dexterity, the vogue of Ruisdael, and Cuyp, and Hobbema, must indeed have seemed perverse. Twenty years after the passage I have quoted was irrevocably in the hands of his disciples, Ruskin might have read the following description of what should lie, in a picture, between imitation and dexterity, to justify both.

“Ruysdael peint comme il pense, sainement, fortement, largement. La qualité extérieure de son travail indique assez bien l'allure ordinaire de son esprit. Il y a dans cette peinture sobre, soucieuse, un peu fière, je ne sais quelle hauteur attristée qui s'annonce de loin, et de près vous captive par un charme de simplicité naturelle et de noble familiarité tout à fait à lui. Une toile de Ruysdael est un tout où l'on sent une ordonnance, une vue d'ensemble, une intention maîtresse, la volonté de peindre une fois pour toutes un des traits de son pays, peut-être bien aussi le désir de fixer le souvenir d'un moment de sa vie. Un fonds solide, un besoin de construire et d'organiser, de subordonner le détail à des ensembles, la couleur à des effets, l'intérêt des choses au plan qu'elles occupent; une parfaite connaissance des lois naturelles et des lois techniques, avec cela un certain dédain pour l'inutile, le trop agréable ou le superflu, un grand goût avec un grand sens, une main fort calme avec le cœur qui bat, tel est à peu près ce qu'on découvre à l'analyse dans un tableau de Ruysdael.”* In short, the contents of a

* Fromentin, “Les Maîtres d'Autrefois,” pp. 248-9.



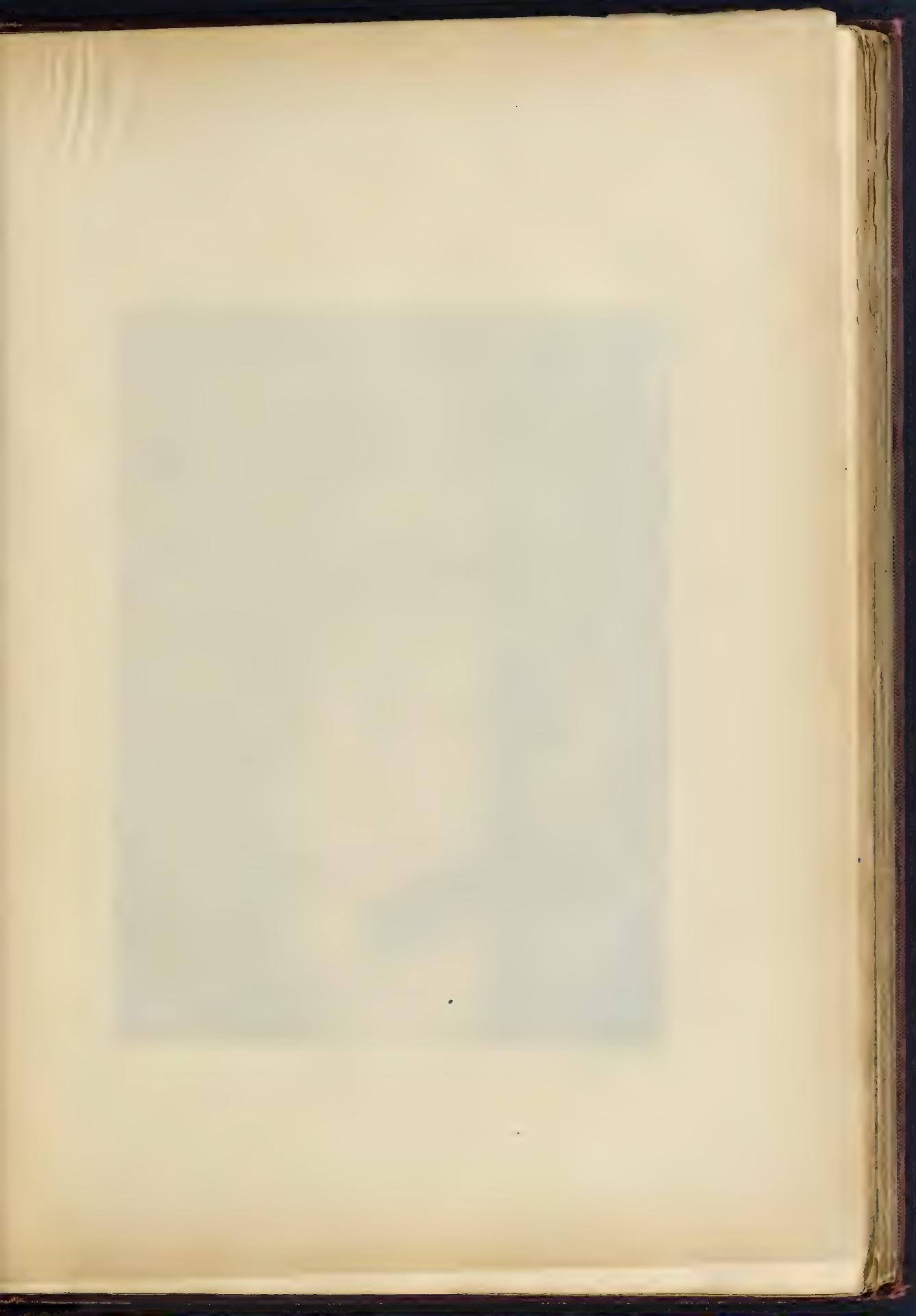
CASSIOBURY.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(18 x 28)

In the Collection of
C. MORLAND AGNEW, Esq.





MEETING OF THAMES AND MEDWAY.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(42 x 564)

In the Collection of
P. A. B. WIDENER, Esq.



FROMENTIN ON RUISDAEL

Ruisdael landscape are there for reasons beyond—and above—either objective truth or technical display, and it is by the profound insight with which these reasons are grasped and the inexorable unity to which they consequently lead that the Dutch master has earned his fame. We have to bear in mind, too, that, acute as it is, even Fromentin's analysis has to indicate the point by working round it. Art can only be explained in terms of art. To no accounter for æsthetic emotion can it be said "rem acu tetigisti." There is an element beyond analysis, like the life in the cell. Harmony perhaps, harmony pure and simple, may be brought within our tests, but the organic unity which makes the supreme work of art, whether we have to do with a thing as complex as a picture or as simple as a Pisano medal, refuses to be translated into any language but its own. The artist can only say to the student: "Look, look long enough and with sufficient goodwill, and in time—perhaps—you will see what it is you have to aim at!" The development of an *artist* depends mainly upon his gradual perception of the intrinsic limits and capacities of the material he is using. The painter who is a painter first and a preacher, poet, botanist—whatever you like—afterwards, turns to "the grace of Nature or her gloom, her tender and sacred seclusions or her reach of power and wrath," not so much to recall impressive phenomena, as to select those which can be painted finally and masterfully, so that his picture, when complete, may ring upon the human senses with a unity, clearness, and freedom from sign of pain and effort similar to Nature's own.

Turner had no sooner finished the group of pictures I have just been discussing than he seems himself to have been struck by their heaviness and want of inner light. He had been treating oil paint as if it were water-colour, laying broad swathes of opaque pigment as he had been accustomed to lay transparent washes, and providing no substitute for the action of the white paper. How he was turned

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to a better practice we can only guess, but judging from the change in his methods after 1805, it seems likely that he had been taking hints from Willem Van de Velde. In 1806 he painted the famous little picture of the "*Victory* beating up the Channel with the Body of Nelson on board."* Here all the heaviness and opacity of the earlier sea-pieces have disappeared. The general effect is as light and airy as a water-colour. The shadowed hollows of the waves suggest the depths below, and behind the autumn clouds sweeping up from the south-west we can feel the illimitable spaces of the sky. A year after the "*Victory*" was painted, Turner had the "*Sun rising in a Mist*" at the Academy. That was in 1807; in 1808 he showed the "*Trafalgar*," now in the National Gallery; and twelve months later still the "*Spithead: Boat's Crew recovering an Anchor*" (see Plate), in the same collection. To my mind, the "*Spithead*" is the completest thing Turner ever did on the basis of the Dutch tradition. In conception it carries the ideas of Ruisdael, Van de Velde, de Vlieger, Van de Capelle, etc., to a pitch of dignity and grandeur far beyond their reach, while in such purely technical matters as the opposition of reflecting to absorbent surfaces, the clearness of the shadows and the gradation of the impasto, it shows that at the time it was painted Turner had thoroughly learnt his lesson.† How docile he could be as a scholar is shown even more convincingly by a certain picture, painted about this time, for which he took the scaffolding from Rembrandt. This is the "*Windmill and Lock*," in the collection of the late Sir Francis Cook. It rests so frankly upon Lord Lansdowne's famous "*Mill*" that to criticise it as an independent picture would be beside the mark. Practically the

* In the possession of Sir Donald Currie, G.C.M.G. (see Plate).

† The silver tonality of this picture is now somewhat affected by a darkened glaze over what—on the analogy of seascape—should, I suppose, be called the forewater! The crests and long hollows of the nearer waves are covered with a skin of brownish yellow, suggestive of an experiment with some material which never came off a palette. Mr. Butterly suggests beer. Whatever it may be, it has changed with time, and modified the general harmony. Traces of the same glaze are to be found in the "*Shipwreck*," and in other pictures of this time.





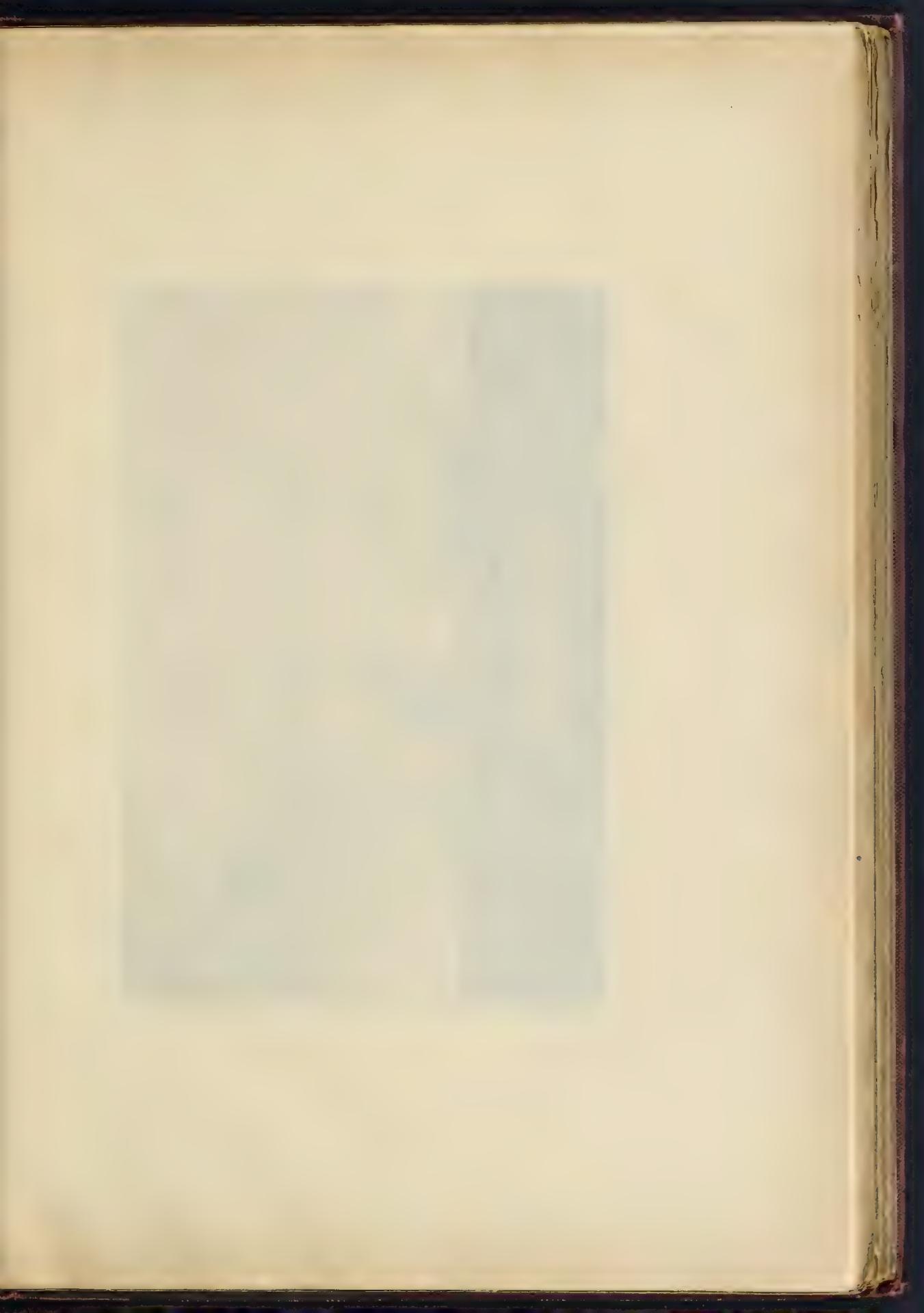
BOATS CARRYING OUT CABLES, &c.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(40 51)

In the Collection of
GEO. DONALDSON, Esq.





THE VICTORY RETURNING FROM TRAFALGAR.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(26 x 39)

In the Collection of
SIR DONALD CURRIE, G.C.M.G.



HIS IMAGINATION

one specially Turneresque thing about it is the production downwards of the vertical lines of the mill by those of the lock gates, a contrivance of which Turner was fond. It gives an effective contrast between the horizontal and vertical elements of the arabesque. Another but somewhat later *pasticcio* upon the great Dutchman is the picture known as "Rembrandt's Daughter," at Farnley. Here the general arrangement, the colour scheme, and even some of the minor elements of the design, are adopted frankly from the "Potiphar's Wife," which passed some years ago from Grittleton House to the Berlin Museum.

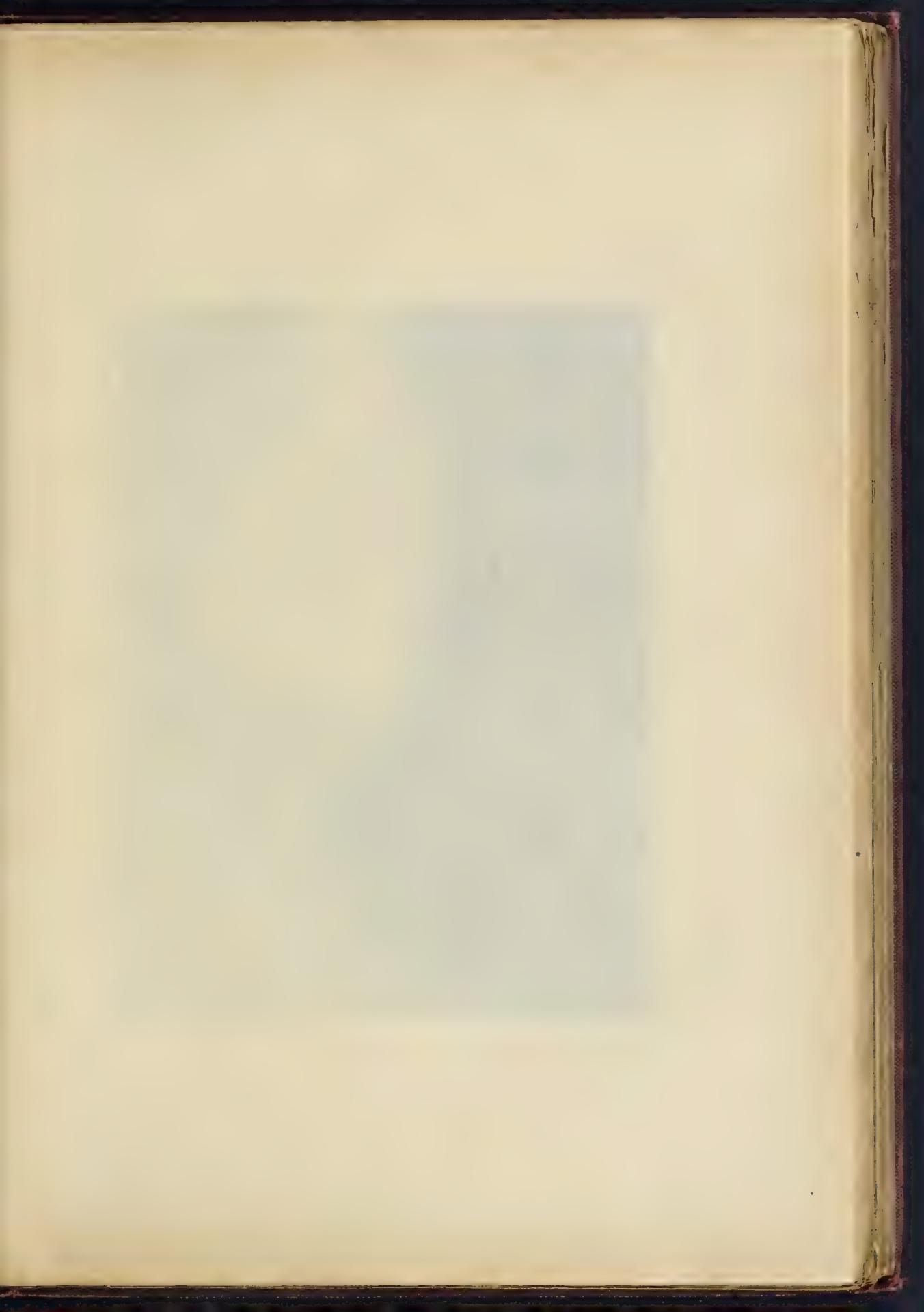
Let us return for a moment to our narrative.

It has sometimes been asserted that Turner paid a second visit to the Continent in 1804. The statement is improbable, for at that time the war with Napoleon was again in full swing. No confirmation of it, moreover, is to be found beyond the appearance of a "Schaffhausen" in the Academy of 1806, and the existence of some Swiss drawings dated in that year in the Fawkes collection. But these must either have been based on his notes and memories of 1802 or on someone else's drawings. His second experience of the South was pretty certainly deferred until 1819, when he made the tour on the Rhine which resulted in those fine drawings on grey grounds which were so long at Farnley. Crossing the Channel a second time in the same year, he added the glories of Italy to his stock of impressions. During the interval between his first Continental journey and the second, his energies had been mainly governed by his strange desire to meet and vanquish all the champions of his own art in turn. It is difficult to say whether in so proceeding he said to himself, like Napoleon, "*Je vais me mesurer avec*—so and so," or whether he simply took the line of least resistance. Many strong imaginations cannot act when they have nothing but a blank sheet before them. I think Turner's imagination was one of these. Before it could work at all it had

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actually to see something to work upon. In spite of its extraordinary vigour, wealth, and grandeur, it required a lead, at least during the first thirty years of his career. It is remarkable that among the thousands of sketches he left behind him, scarcely any invented schemes of pictures, or abstract compositions, such as most painters make in scores, are to be found. His sketches are all notes from Nature. The processes of his imagination were those of development, expansion, and addition, rather than of initial invention. Most of his oil pictures dated earlier than about 1830 suggest something we have seen elsewhere. Even before the "Ulysses and Polyphemus" of 1829 (see Plate), which may be fairly considered the finest combination of art and nature he ever achieved, memories arise like ghosts, and we find ourselves wondering whether he ever saw the famous Titian which has lately migrated from Cobham Hall to Boston.* From first to last Turner was rather an improver on a splendid scale, an expander and enhancer of the objects which attracted him, than a man driven by the desire to *make*. We cannot imagine him whittling a stick into an amusing shape or playing with a bit of clay until he had thumbed it into art. He was always projecting his imagination outwards and setting it objective tasks. He cried to Nature as well as to other artists, "I can improve on what you do." In spirit he was a challenger, and we know that choice of weapons lies with the challenged. He competed with Nature, just as he competed with the Poussins, with Claude and Wilson. He modified and exaggerated her features, not to make a new thing—depending, indeed, on external facts for its scaffolding, but on its own intrinsic balance, coherence, and repose for artistic finality—but to make old, eternal things more gorgeous, more self-assertive and yet more mysteriously human than they are already.

* He must have seen it. It was brought to England with the Orleans Gallery, and publicly exhibited in London from the end of December, 1798, to the end of June, 1799, with the rest of those Orleans pictures which had failed to take the fancy of either the Duke of Bridgewater, or Lord Carlisle, or Lord Stafford; it was also at the British Institution, in 1819.





THE TROUT STREAM.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(30 45)

In the Collection of
ABEL BUCKLEY, Esq.





WALTON BRIDGES.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(35 x 48)

In the Collection of
LADY WANTAGE.



PICTURES BETWEEN 1806 AND 1820

The years between 1806 and 1820 are curiously portioned out between his two forms of rivalry. In 1806 he capped Poussin with his "Garden of the Hesperides," and did homage to Rembrandt with his "Windmill and Lock"; in 1811, 1814, and 1815, he wrestled with Claude in "Mercury and Herse,"* in "Apuleia in search of Apuleius,"† and in "Crossing the Brook" (see Plate); while in 1819 he gave the *coup de grâce* to W. Van de Velde with "The Meuse—Orange Merchantman going to pieces on the Bar" (see Plate). In all these pictures the various models are kept apart with ease. There is no attempt at Carraccian combinations. Elements from Claude are not allowed to intrude upon Gaspar, nor those from Rembrandt upon Van de Velde. And yet all through these same years Turner is producing things in a more personal style, which may be traced, like an underground river cropping up here and there, from about 1797 to its bolder emergence in or about 1820. During the thirteen years which elapsed between the "Hesperides" and the "Meuse"—i.e. between 1806 and 1819—his more individualistic productions were, "Bligh Sand" (before 1809), the "Trout Stream" (1807),‡ the "Wreck of the *Minotaur*,"§ and "Abingdon, Berkshire" (1810), "Apollo and the Python" (1811), "Snowstorm—Hannibal crossing the Alps" (1812), "A Frosty Morning" (1813) (see Plate), and "Walton Bridges" (1815).|| All these are marked by the individual preferences which were afterwards to mark his great period, more especially by that love of a visible atmosphere and the pregnant mysteriousness to which it leads, which I venture to trace to the effect of London upon his childish mind.

* In the possession of Sir Samuel Montagu, Bart., M.P. (See Plate.)

† Several explanations of this title have been given. Probably it has no explanation beyond the painter's fancy. Mr. Monkhouse suggests that Turner had a vague recollection of Apuleius's connection with Apulia, and thought the latter was a woman! I have already given my reasons for believing that Turner was a much less ignorant person than such a theory implies.

‡ In the possession of Abel Buckley, Esq. (See Plate.)

§ In the collection of Lord Yarborough.

|| In the collection of Lady Wantage. (See Plate.)

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Of Turner's private life during the years between 1800 and 1820 no very connected account can be given. Between the Exhibitions of 1799 and 1800 he moved from Hand Court to 64, Harley Street. This latter house he may have actually bought; for at his death, fifty years later, it and the one next door, as well as the house round the corner in Queen Anne Street which is so intimately connected with his name, all belonged to him and communicated with each other at the back. From 1801 to 1803 his address in the Academy catalogue is 75, Norton Street, Portland Road, where he probably had a studio. In 1804 it is again 64, Harley Street, to which, from 1808 to 1811, is added "West End, Upper Mall, Hammersmith." After 1811, Queen Anne Street West appears, and remains to the end, being supplemented, from 1814 to 1826, by his Twickenham address, called "Solus Lodge" in the former year, and "Sandycombe Lodge" from 1815 to 1826. There is evidence that in these various houses Turner lived with some reasonable degree of comfort, and that the squalor and neglect which depressed visitors to his gallery did not at first extend to the more private rooms.

Between 1802 and 1819 the war, as I believe, prevented him from renewing his acquaintance with the Continent. During these years, indeed, he travelled much, but in his own country. He visited many great houses, and made pictures of them for their owners. Two "Tableys,"* one in a calm, the other in a wind, were in the 1809 Academy; two "Lowther Castles"† and a "Petworth"‡ in that of 1810. "Somerhill"§ was painted in 1811, and "Raby Castle"|| in 1817. During these same years he was a constant visitor at Farnley. Between 1811 and 1814 (the exact date is doubtful) he paid his first and, so far as is known, his only visit to Devonshire and to those relations of his own who were settled at Barnstaple and Exeter. During this journey he made many of the drawings afterwards engraved by George

* One now at Petworth.

† At Lowther.

‡ At Petworth.

§ In the possession of Ralph Brocklebank, Esq. (See Plate.)

|| Belongs to Mr. H. Walters, Baltimore.



MERCURY AND HERSE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(75 x 63)

In the Collection of
SIR SAMUEL MONTAGU, Bart.



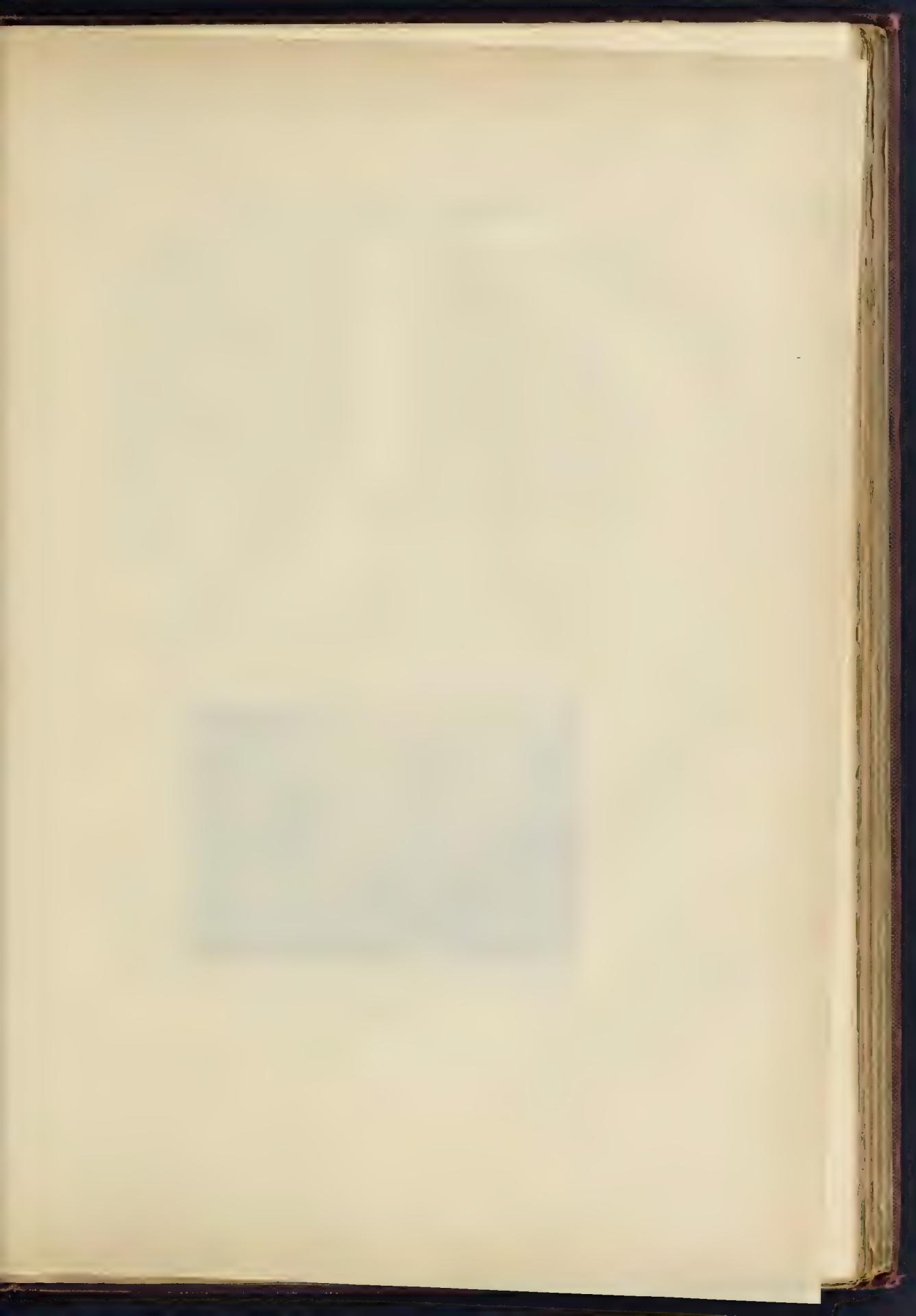
SOMERHILL.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

135 - 172

In the Collection of
RALPH BROCKLEBANK, Esq.





HIGH STREET, EDINBURGH.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

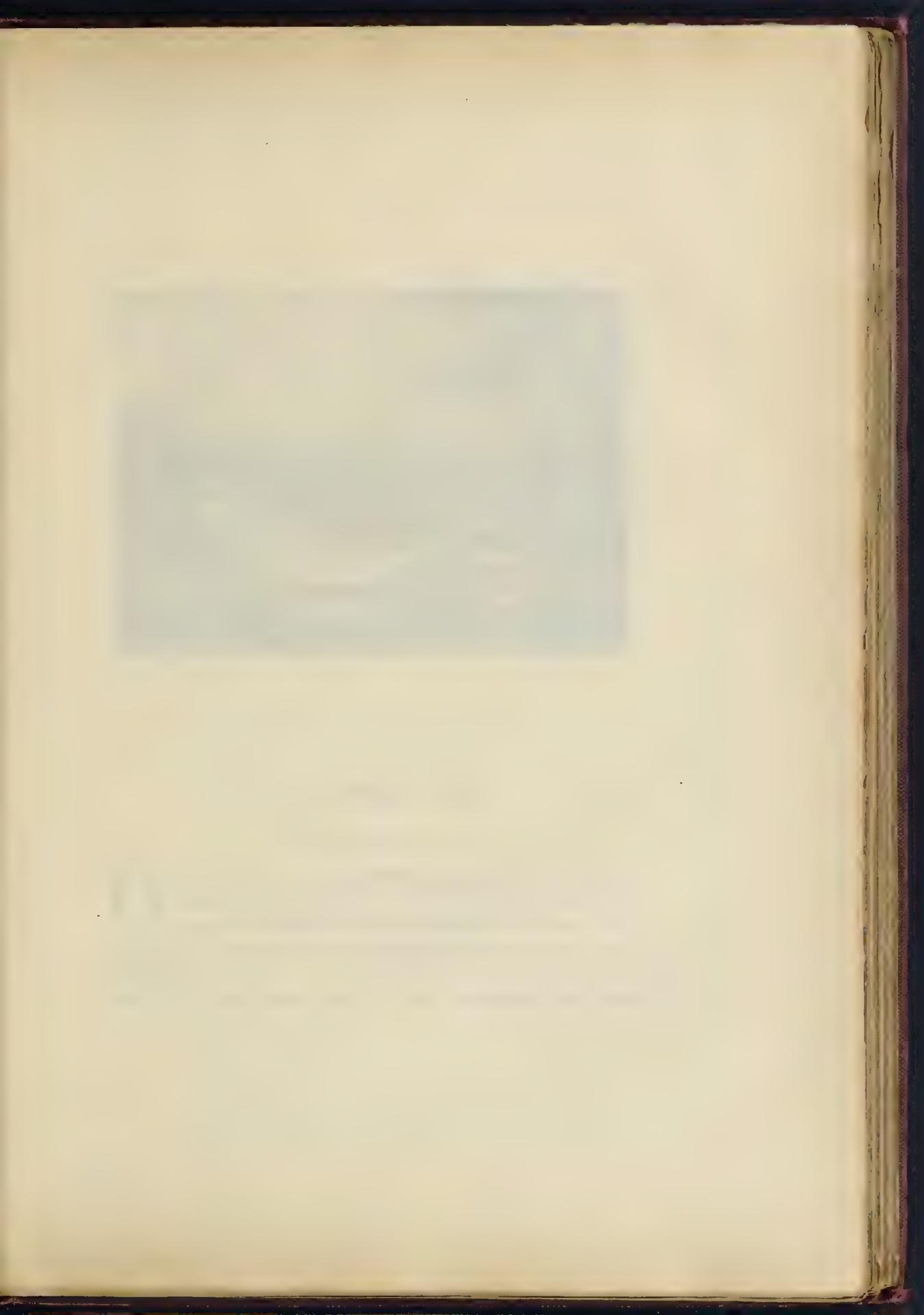
(65 - 93)

In the Collection of
THOMAS BROCKLEBANK, Esq.

EARLY TOURS ABROAD

Cooke in the "Southern Coast." In 1816 he spent several weeks in Yorkshire, chiefly in the neighbourhood of Richmond, collecting the materials, no doubt, if not actually making the drawings, for the plates to Whitaker's "Richmondshire." In 1818 he crossed the Border for the third time, to make drawings for Scott's "Provincial Antiquities"; and in 1819 he made the two foreign tours already mentioned—one of a fortnight on the Rhine, the other in Italy. It remains to be said that during the last twelve of these years—from 1807 to 1819—much of his attention was given to what is likely to be the most durable monument to his fame; I mean to the preparation and production of his *Liber Studiorum*. But this is a matter so important to a proper understanding of his art that it must have a chapter to itself.





BOLTON ABBEY.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(11 + 15)

In the Collection of
GEORGE SALTING, Esq.



CHAPTER IV.

LIBER STUDIORUM.

Of all the quaint rivalries of Turner the quaintest, perhaps, was that with Claude's *Liber Veritatis*. Here he deliberately set himself to outdo a series of memoranda by a full-dress display of learning. The fame of the Chatsworth drawings had been extended, indeed, if not enhanced, by the publication of Earlam's reproductions; but even then its reputation was of a kind which would have stirred

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the rivalry of no great artist who ever lived but Turner. That it should have suggested the notion of publishing a sort of cyclopædia of landscape was not surprising, but that Turner should have so named his publication and arranged its details as to draw attention at every point to the other *Liber*, to insist on the fact of his emulation, and to make it impossible to ignore the *naïveté* of his impulse, is only to be accounted for by the sort of intellectual moat he had excavated between himself and the outer world. The *Liber Veritatis* is a collection of some two hundred drawings, of various degrees of elaboration, made by Claude *after* his own pictures, no doubt to serve as reminders for his private use. Many among them bear on their backs the dates and buyers' names of the original pictures. In manner and in what commerce calls "importance," they may be compared to the drawings contributed by modern French landscape painters to the earlier illustrated catalogues of the Salon.* They were never meant to be taken as works of art on their own account, although Claude, being, after all, an artist, could not help inspiring them with modest little souls of their own. Such things were dragged into a false position when they were reproduced by Earlam, still more when Turner turned on his searchlight and confronted them with the elaborate productions of his own genius. That he did so, however, is a good thing for us, for *Liber Studiorum*, putting colour aside, not only shows his gift at its best, it is the only part of his *œuvre* which has nothing to fear from the passage of time.†

The attack on Claude's monopoly must have been projected in the very first years of the nineteenth century, for Turner's opening shot was fired in 1807. The first part of *Liber* was published on the 20th of January in that year, and its preparation must have taken a

* The allusion is to the drawings, not to their reproductions in the catalogues.

† The most valuable books on the *Liber* are *Turner's Liber Studiorum*, by W. G. Rawlinson; *Notes on the Liber Studiorum*, by the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke; and *Notes and Memoranda respecting the Liber Studiorum*, by John Pye and J. L. Roget.

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considerable time. The scheme was to make drawings in brown for each plate, to etch these in outline on copper, and then to employ the professional engraver to finish them in some method adapted to the reproduction of broad washes of colour. For the most part the drawings* are identical in size with the plates, but in a few cases they are slightly smaller. The pigment mainly used is sepia; but the tint is so often modified by the introduction of other browns that the collection, as a whole, shows a great variety of tones. These drawings, beautiful as they often are, are essentially stepping-stones to something beyond. No man had a finer sense of economy in means than Turner. In working for the engraver he would set on paper exactly what was wanted, and nothing more. He felt no temptation to lavish his gift of delicacy on a scaffolding. Now and then he even makes alterations in a drawing without troubling himself to match its original colour. Apart, then, from the loss of brilliancy, caused by the half-century of daylight to which the fifty-one drawings which originally came to the National Gallery have been exposed, these monochromes do not stand towards the finished mezzotints as Charles Keene's drawings, for instance, do towards the woodcuts in *Punch*. To find Turner's thoughts in their full development we must turn to a fine set of the plates.†

* Eighty-four drawings, classed as designs for the *Liber Studiorum*, are in the National Gallery, fifty-one being part of the original inheritance from Turner, and twenty-seven of the Henry Vaughan bequest. The British Museum has three, and a few others are distributed in two or three private collections, making about a hundred altogether. This total is only reached, however, by including many things which have no known connection with the authentic *Liber* designs beyond similarity of size and method.

† Replying to some critic, Ruskin says, in the *Literary Gazette* for November 13, 1858: "You object that the drawings for the *Liber Studiorum* are not included in my catalogue. They are not so, because I did not consider them as, in a true sense, drawings at all. They are merely washes of colour, laid roughly to guide the mezzotint engraver in his first process; the drawing, properly so-called, was all put in by Turner when he etched the plates, or super-added by repeated touchings on the proofs. These brown guides, for they are nothing more, are entirely unlike the painter's usual work, and in every way inferior to it; so that students wishing to understand the composition of the *Liber*, must always work from the plates, and not

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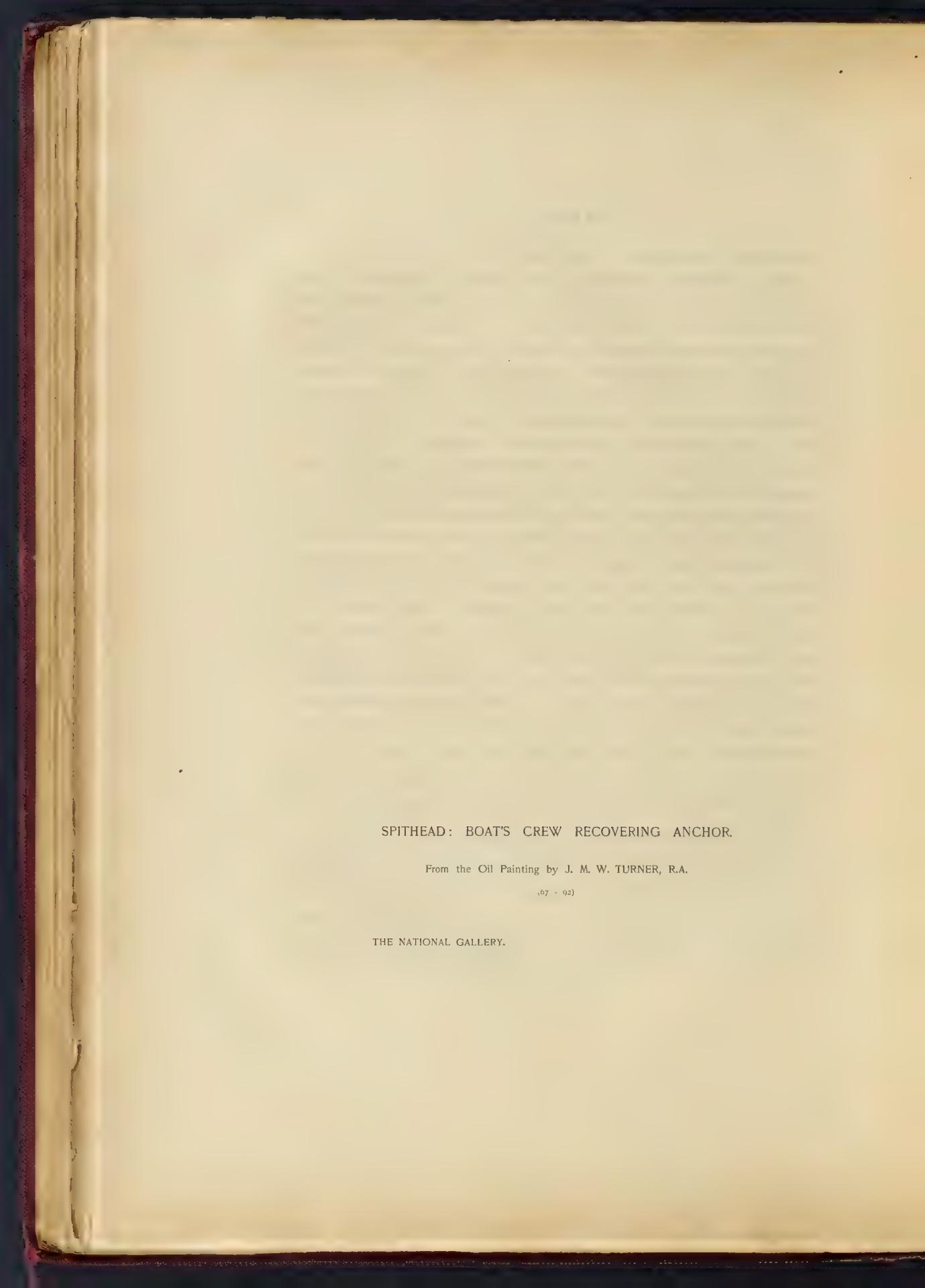
The troubles of *Liber* began with the selection of a tone process and of engravers to carry it out. As Turner proposed to etch his own outline,* what he had to determine was the best method of introducing chiaroscuro. In the hands of F. C. Lewis and others, aquatint had been giving satisfactory results; moreover, Lewis had already engraved a small plate of "Coalbrookdale" for Turner in that method. So his first choice fell upon it. He etched a subject, "Bridge and Goats," afterwards issued as No. 43, and bargained with Lewis to complete it in aquatint for five guineas. This turned out to be the only plate finished solely in aquatint† of the series; for during its progress Turner sent a second drawing—a "Chepstow Castle," afterwards re-named "River Wye"—to Lewis, demanding that he should either etch it himself or dispense with an etching altogether. Lewis agreed, but wished to raise his terms to eight guineas. The result was that Turner accepted the first plate, paid five guineas for it, withdrew the "Chepstow," and closed his account with Lewis. He wished, in short, to vary the contract on his own side, while denying a similar freedom to the other party to the bargain. In a rough-and-ready fashion Turner, no doubt, believed himself honest. In those various dealings with his *Liber* prints which look so like sharp practice, he seems always to have preserved a certain balance between what he gave and what he took. He sophisticated his

from these first indications of purpose." This seems to me greatly overstated, especially the opinion I have put in italics. It would give an entirely wrong impression to anyone who had never seen the drawings. A few of them, such as the "Holy Island Cathedral," the "Morpeth," the "Kirkstall Crypt," the "Dunstanborough," the "Mill near the Grande Chartreuse," and the "Egremont Seapiece," are delightful little works on their own account, showing both great spontaneity and an immediate solicitude. They are, in short, better than the corresponding plates. But there can be no doubt that, as a rule, Turner was thinking chiefly of the final purpose as he made the drawings. In this respect they may be compared to his designs for things like the vignettes to Rogers and Scott.

* Following, no doubt, the precedent of Girtin, in the "Views of Paris."

† This statement must not, however, be taken too literally. Both roulette and rocker have been used in the lower part of the plate.





SPITHEAD: BOAT'S CREW RECOVERING ANCHOR.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(67 - 92)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



LIBER STUDIORUM

proofs, but only after he had put new work on the plates. It must be confessed, however, that the *fine fleur* of honesty was beyond his comprehension,* and when we think over his treatment of Lewis we cannot help suspecting it to have been caused, partly at least, by a desire to get rid of aquatint, and substitute the nobler method of that *manière anglaise* into the secrets of which he had lately been initiated. Before 1807, the year at which we have arrived, mezzotint had been mainly confined to the reproduction of figure pictures; but a few scrapers, especially Richard Earlom (who was still alive when Turner was searching for a process), had shown its capacity to render not only the most delicate gradation, but even a reasonably fine line. Earlom, the engraver of Claude's *Liber*, whose experience had lain more closely than that of anyone else to the course marked out by Turner,† was an old man in 1807; but there was no dearth of successors. Among these was the painter's namesake, Charles Turner. Tradition says that, attracted by the name, Turner the painter called upon Turner the engraver, and was by him initiated into the process of scraping a plate. Charles Turner was not only the most prolific,‡ he was also one of the most artistic of mezzotinters. Some of his plates have a breadth and unity scarcely surpassed even in the greatest days of the art. His relations with the painter seem to have been exceptionally smooth for a time. He was so successful as a teacher that J. M. W. Turner was afterwards enabled to scrape with his own hands one of the finest of the *Liber* plates, the "Junction of the Severn and the Wye," as well as some in which his success was less complete.

The process finally determined on and used throughout the

* His dealings with Cooke, the publisher of the "Southern Coast," to be presently mentioned, are another instance of the same thing.

† He had, for instance, translated Hobbema into mezzotint with curious success.

‡ During his life of eighty-three years, he scraped no fewer than 685 plates (Alfred Whitman, Catalogue in the "Masters of Mezzotint," 1898).

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production of *Liber*, after the experiment with Lewis, was as follows: Turner made the initial drawing, carrying it only so far and putting only so much labour into it as the immediate purpose required. He then received from the engraver a copper on which an etching ground had been duly laid. To this he transferred his outline, using the point with masterly freedom and assurance after his initial attempts. The copper, with the drawing, was then returned to the engraver, who bit in the painter's outline, supplied proofs of the completed etching, then rocked the plate, and finished it to the best of his ability in mezzotint. Proofs were then again submitted to Turner, who criticised them minutely, occasionally working on the plate himself, and always showing extreme solicitude on such points as the value of a tone, and the colour and variations of the ink.*

Thus, speaking generally, was *Liber* produced, although a few plates were differently treated. In some cases, happily not many, the etched outline was left to the engraver; in others—eleven plates in all—the painter did the scraping himself.†

Turner's first intention, after getting rid of aquatint, was that Charles Turner should engrave the whole series. Unfortunately a difficulty arose, similar in principle to that with Lewis. The painter seems to have agreed to pay his namesake eight guineas a plate, and then, after a considerable number had been done, to have foisted the publication and sale of the parts on the engraver as well. In this Charles appears to have acquiesced at first, but after a short experience

* Direct evidence is wanting for some of these statements, but probability, as well as a critical examination of the results, leaves little doubt of their truth.

† "Two things are noticeable about Turner's own mezzotinting—one the rapidity with which it wore, as compared with the work of the professional engravers; and the other (arising doubtless out of this) the extraordinary way in which he changed the effects from time to time" (W. G. Rawlinson, to whose admirable catalogue *raisonné* I must refer the reader for a more detailed discussion of Turner's division of labour with his engravers).

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he demanded an advance to ten guineas a plate. Turner refused, and took his work elsewhere. After a time the breach was patched up, and Charles Turner resumed work on the *Liber*. The total number of plates contributed by him was twenty-three—twenty before the quarrel, and three afterwards. Meanwhile the painter employed William Say, who scraped eleven plates; Dunkarton, who did five; Dawe, four; Hodgetts, three; S. W. Reynolds and Clint, two each; Annis, one by himself and two more conjointly with Easling; and Lupton, the youngest of them all, who did four of the published plates and a few of the unpublished. These figures amount to a total of sixty plates out of the seventy-one published; the remaining eleven are those mezzotinted by the painter.

As to the printing, it was carried out by Lahee, of Castle Street, Leicester Square. "The paper chiefly employed was a fine-ribbed, hand-made description, which he habitually obtained from France expressly for his copper-plates. It contained a certain amount of iron, which accounts for the stains one sometimes sees in *Liber* plates. Occasionally Whatman paper was used for the prints, as it was almost invariably for the etchings. The very late and worthless impressions, which appeared chiefly at the Turner sale in 1873, were taken on a smoother and stouter English paper.

"Turner was in the habit of constantly visiting Lahee's printing office, to watch the results of his alterations and the effects of new plates. Standing by the press, he would examine each impression as it came off, and with burin (?) dry point) or scraper make such changes or retouches on the copper as he thought desirable; sometimes getting the plates into such a muddle that they had to be sent home to him to be seriously treated." *

From all this it will be seen that Turner spared no pains to secure

* Rawlinson, op. cit., p. xxviii.

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victory in his attack on Claude.* It is disappointing to find a great painter driven to the production of a work of art by any desire but that of creation, and the whole business becomes a little grotesque when we remember the disparity of the forces brought into the field. On the one side a half-playful artist, with a sheet of paper, a pen, and brush; on the other, an artist doing all he knew, a bevy of engravers, pens, brushes, copperplates, etching points, rollers, scrapers, burnishers, printers, proofs, trial states, and what not. Turner's sense of humour should have saved him from giving such an opportunity to the scoffer. But, after all, it is ungrateful to question his motive, for its result has been to enrich us with a unique work of art. The inspiration, perhaps, was vicious, but the result brought justification.

A great deal has been written on the moral aims of *Liber*—on its system of sub-division into “Pastoral;” “Elegant, or Epic, Pastoral;” “Historical,” etc.; and on the details of its production, publication, and subsequent career. These matters are for the most part outside my purpose, and so for their more detailed discussion I must again refer the reader to the volumes of Mr. W. G. Rawlinson, Mr. J. L. Roget, Mr. Stopford Brooke, and others. I must confess that to me the discussions which have taken place over such matters as the classification of the *Liber* plates seem a mistaken use of time and energy. The whole business of H. and P., and E. P. and M. was childish, and could only occur to such a puzzle-headed man as Turner was apt to be outside his art. The sub-divisions served no purpose at all, except to embarrass the artist and make it difficult for him to keep the promises he had made to himself. The object of art is not “to delineate everything that is visible beneath the

* Attempts have been made to deny that competition with the *Liber Veritatis* was seriously in Turner's mind when he started his own enterprise. This idea seems to me quite untenable in view of the painter's general conduct in the first and second periods of his art, to say nothing of that letter to Robinson the publisher, in which he proposes a similar attack on Wilson and Woollett.



FISHMARKET ON THE SANDS: SUN RISING IN A VAPOUR.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(34 x 44)

In the Collection of
EDWARD CHAPMAN, M.P.



LIBER STUDIORUM

sun," but to create beauty. We do not examine a *Liber* plate in order to grasp the difference between a "pastoral," an "elegant pastoral," and a "historical" subject, but to learn how emotion can be translated into terms of line and tone. For the same reason it appears to me a matter of very little importance whether Turner meant to moralise or not when he contrasted the beauty of a London park with the lumpish ugliness of the boys and girls who make it their playground. No doubt he was fond of ulterior meanings; he loved to suggest that his mind was teeming with deep thoughts, to which he might give expression an he would. So far, however, as he does let us catch glimpses of them his moral ideas are commonplace enough. They never amount to more than a perception of obvious contrasts—between strength and weakness, between things that are and things that have been, between human ambition and human destiny—to which most of us are equal. It is scarcely worth while to dwell upon such moralisings as these, especially as they have been treated, once for all, with an amount of tenderness, acuteness, and ingenuity to which the present writer can lay no sort of claim. Mr. Stopford Brooke has squeezed *Liber* dry, so far as its possibilities of an esoteric meaning go. It cannot be denied that he has by doing so enormously increased the pleasure the literary man may derive from these seventy-one plates; but I suspect that if Turner could read his volume it would touch him with all the charm of novelty!

For me, the *Liber* is a confession of æsthetic faith, a declaration by Turner of what he believed to be the aim and scope of landscape painting, a guide-post directing us into the recesses of his artistic soul, and enabling us to explore both its weakness and its amazing strength. We can, for instance, learn from it that he was a colourist. The peculiar quality of its gradations, the way in which its chiaroscuro suggests and even demands colour—as, for instance,

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in that passage in "The Lake of Thun" where he sets the peak of the Niesen against a coronet of electric fire—could only be conceived by an imagination at home with colour. Bearing in mind that the *Liber* was begun in 1806 and abandoned in 1819, we can nearly divine the whole Turner from its pages, and, as I think, explain to ourselves with some confidence why his art appears supreme to one class of artists and the mass of amateurs, while to those who prefer the more Latin view of art—the view which has had to put up with so much contumely through a characteristically English misapprehension of the phrase "art for art's sake"—it seems deficient in a quality by which many humble artists and modest works of art have a firm hold on immortality. This defect lies on the threshold. It has to do with the initial conception of the *Liber*, and must be accepted as a continuing modifier of its internal completeness. Put shortly, it is the want of intrinsic meaning in its substance.

Turner's etching has been praised, I will not say extravagantly, but at least unreservedly, by a high authority, the late Philip Gilbert Hamerton; but line has a delight of its own which the painter did not fully explore. As representations his etchings for *Liber* are superb. They suggest the growth and forms of trees, the structure of rocks, the conduct of water under the stress of wind or invitation of gravity, with perfect knowledge as well as with that sense of Nature's infinity in loveliness in which he stands alone. But the tense vibration of the etched line, the quick, electric sympathy with which it answers to the etcher's emotion, welding it in one creative act with the truth he has to tell, is not so evident. Compare one of the best of the etchings—the "Holy Island Cathedral," the "Cephalus and Procris," the "Woman at a Tank,"* or the "St. Catherine's Hill," a favourite of mine—with any Rembrandt landscape, say "Six's Bridge," or even with such a fine Seymour Haden as "Erith Marshes," and you will have to confess that,

* Commonly called "Hindoo Ablutions"; but is she not rather using the tank as a mirror?

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in spite of the natural beauty suggested by the point as Turner wields it, his line is without the peculiar and particular soul with which it is imbued by the born etcher.

This, of course, would not be a fair comparison if we could point to some other production of Turner's in which the essential qualities of line were better understood. In *Liber*, etching is not there for its own sake: it was used as a scaffolding for a tone process, and so, you may say, to compare its results with those obtained under freer conditions is absurd. That, of course, is true; but, fortunately, opportunities are plentiful enough for the study of Turner's feeling about line, and the more use we make of those opportunities the more convinced do we become that its essential qualities appealed to him but slightly, and that his interest was roused mainly, if not exclusively, by its power to represent and illustrate. It is the same with his chiaroscuro. His intention is not, like that of Rembrandt, to talk with light and shade, but to play with lights and shadows as he finds them; he does not use chiaroscuro for the direct expression of spontaneous emotion, but for the reflex expression of feelings excited by external phenomena.

I have no doubt that many—if there should be many—who read these lines will think that all this is mere splitting of hairs, and that any attempt to distinguish between created and represented beauty is waste of time. To me, however, it seems important that one should have a clear idea of why it is that an unalloyed satisfaction, so far as it goes, can be felt in such a thing as a print from a few square inches of copper on which Rembrandt has scratched a dying tree and the top of a hat,* while not a few of those who have spent their lives on art are left with a sense of want before the most beautiful of Turner's plates. In genius at large the Englishman was the Dutchman's equal; why, then, is his work less poignant? The explanation lies in

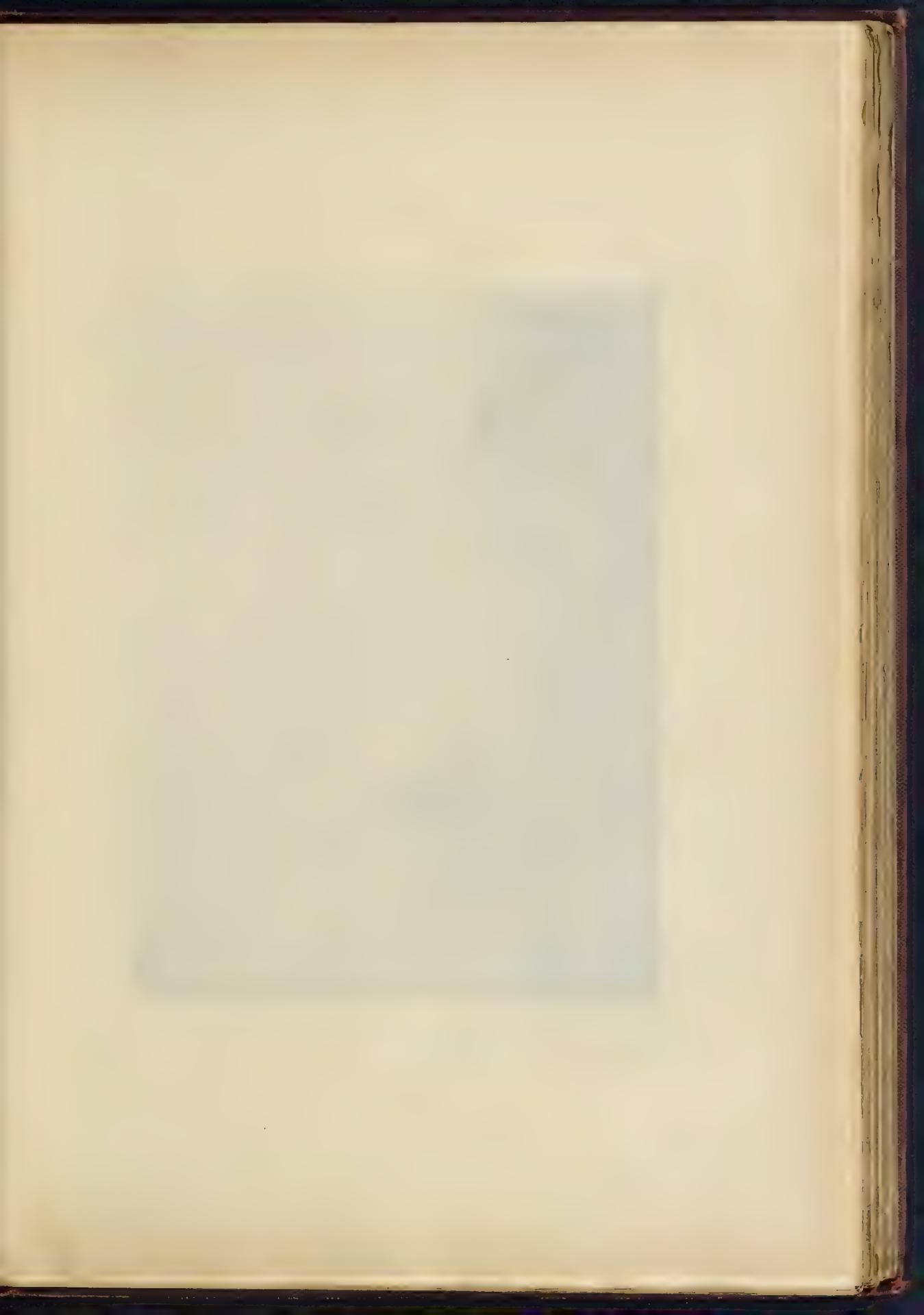
* No. 154 in Middleton's Catalogue; 349 in Charles Blanc's; 360 in Dutuit's.

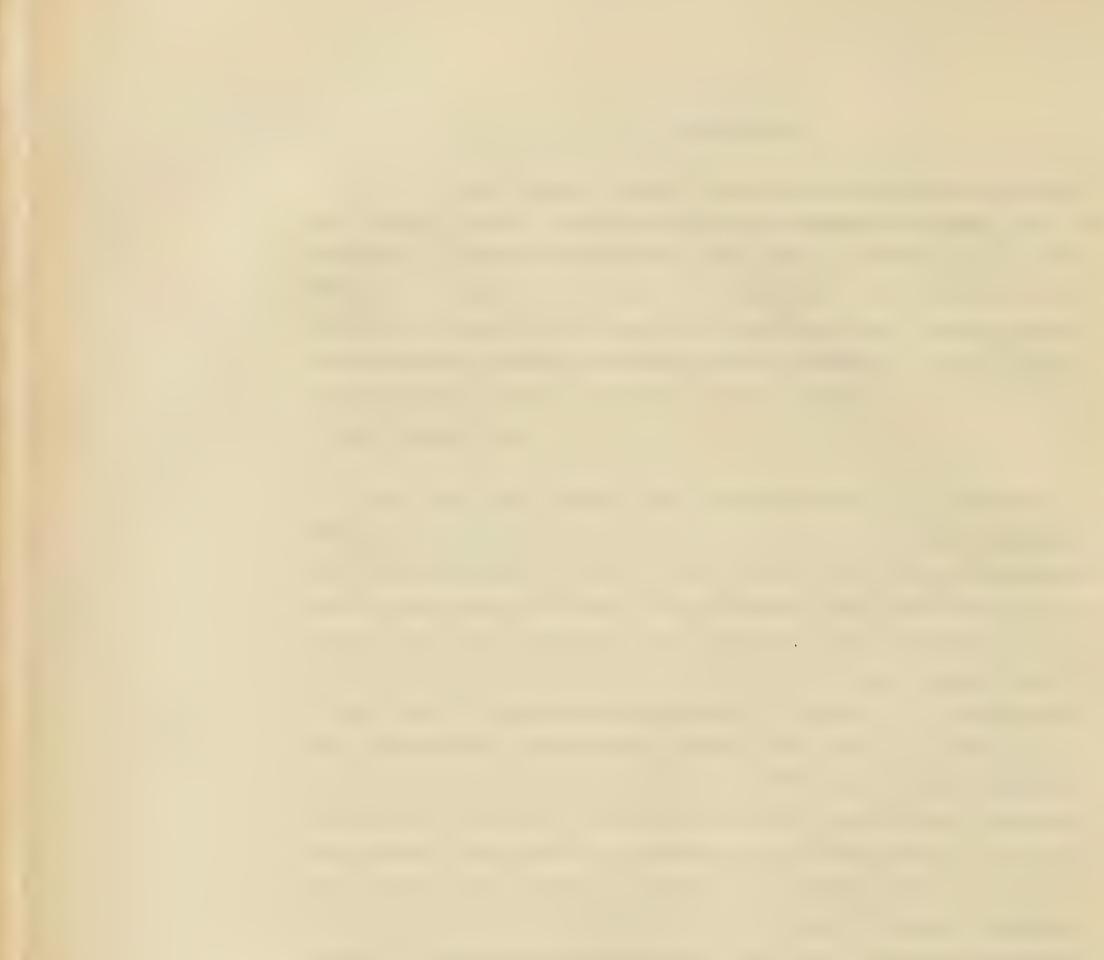
TURNER

this, that Turner imposed an office on line, while Rembrandt developed its essential powers. Rembrandt felt an emotional sympathy with his material—an emotion expressed in the quality of every line he drew; Turner's sympathy was not with his means, but with his visions, which explains not only the lukewarm interest felt in him by those trained in the Latin tradition, but also that indifference to the physical constitution of his own productions which has led to the death of so many among them.

The real glory of the *Liber Studiorum* lies in its description of Nature. Turner does not analyse her beauty; he does not explain *why* she is beautiful; but he does tell us *how*, with a completeness and a grasp on the detail of phenomena which no one else has approached. His treatment of all objects is equally convincing, unless, indeed, it be the human figure. We know from other evidence that he could draw the figure well enough when he liked, so it is curious that the one thing he slurs over, and presents, as it were, in symbol, in these seventy-one plates, is their population. He felt, perhaps, that figures which could be looked at for their own sake would divide the interest too much. And, after all, perhaps it is a mistake to say he slurred them over. They appear symbolic at first sight, because our eye is so much keener to note deficiencies in our own direction than in any other. If rocks and trees could see and speak, they would probably complain that the painter had shown an unfair preference in the opposite way, and rendered his own kind with a completeness denied to theirs.

My own favourites in *Liber* are those plates in which Turner's extraordinary skill in suggesting the beauty of trees has the best chance of showing itself. His skill in combining the beauty of individual trees with that of tree companies and regiments was unrivalled. His interest, in short, never flagged. Look, for example, at the wood overhanging the water on the left of the "Raglan." You may count the separate





HULK'S ON THE TAMAR.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(36 x 48)

In the Collection of
LORD LECONFIELD.



LIBER STUDIORUM

trees and admire the form of each, and yet the clump as a whole has its character, it delineates the shape and rise of the ground on which it stands, it does its work in the general pattern, and carries on the space note struck by the opposite and less encumbered bank. So well do they fit the ground, you feel that if the trees were away the composition would still be good, the evening sun would still pour through the mediæval skeleton upon happy surfaces beyond. And the central clump, the outpost at the bridge, how beautiful it is! And yet the "Raglan" was not etched by Turner. Mr. Stopford Brooke even calls the etching "so commonplace and monotonous that—I almost seem to hear Turner say, 'I must save the subject from failure and mezzotint it myself!'" This judgment is a little too hard, perhaps, on Dawe, to whom the etching is generally ascribed.

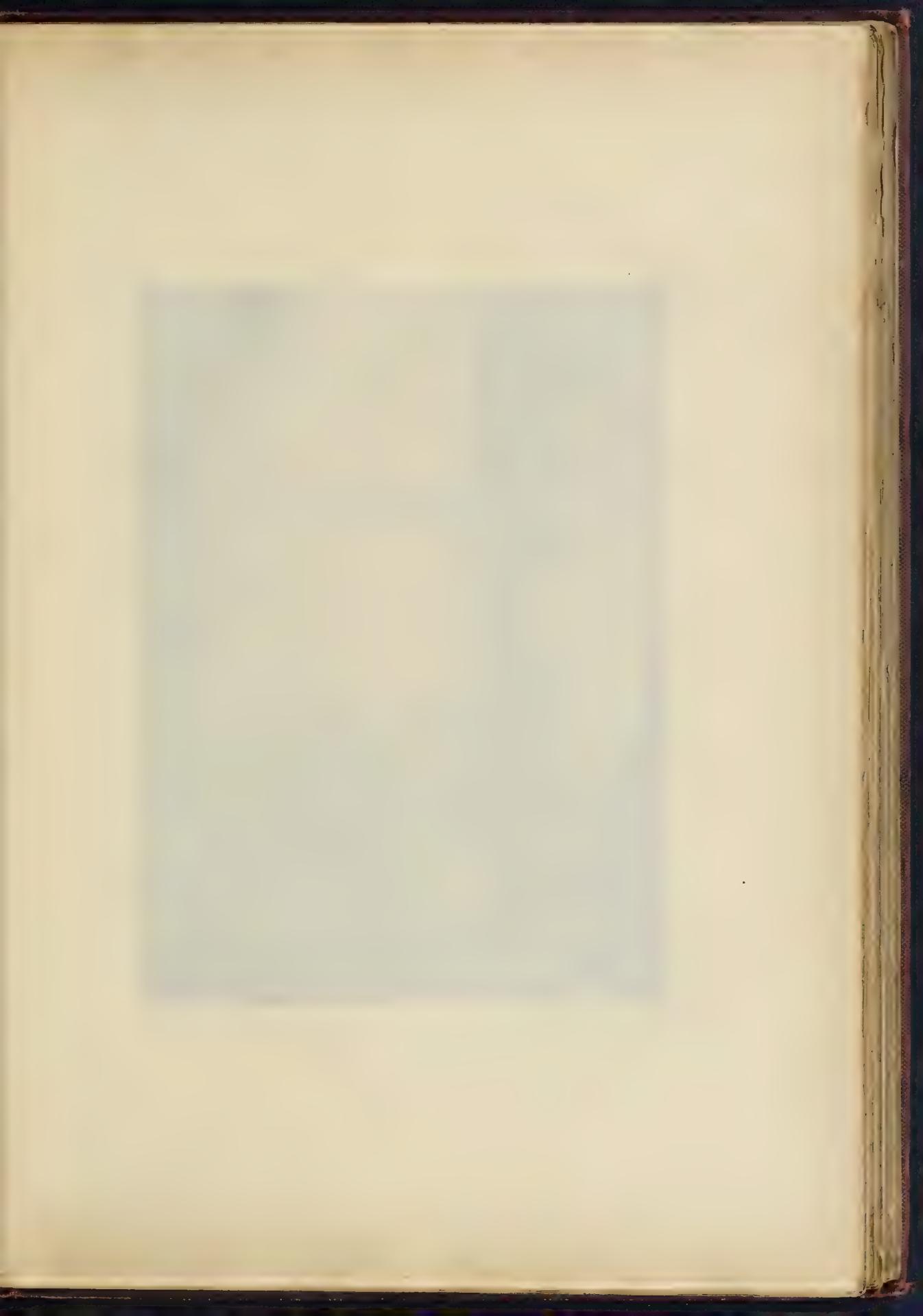
Finer than the "Raglan," more intense in its passion, and closer in its unity, is the somewhat similar "Procris and Cephalus." To me this seems the most consummate of all the *Liber* designs. Here again we have a company of trees, as individual and yet as eager in collaboration as ladies in a minuet. The pattern made by their stems is perfect in its rhythm, while they bend round and over the tragic focus with exactly the right amount of elemental sympathy. Nothing is forced, but no chance of expression is missed, and the longer we look the more profound does the painter's insight into the mood of Nature appear. The subtlety of art, too, the slightness of the barrier between success and comparative failure, is curiously illustrated. Take away the few strokes of the scraper which represent Aurora, and half the charm* would vanish.

The "St. Catherine's Hill" is not usually classed among the great successes of *Liber*, and yet I think it does what it sets out to do with a completeness rivalled by very few of its companions. In spite of the

* I wonder whether Turner had Wilson's "Niobe" in his mind when he conceived the design. The fable seems to me to be rightly interpreted in the letter from Mr. Webster Thomson, printed by Mr. Stopford Brooke (Notes, etc., p. 136).

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ruined chapel on the hill the melancholy note is nowhere struck. The passion is that of evening peace, of work done and rest at hand, of drawing in from the dispersed labours of the day to the common shelter and common repose of the night. The etching is among the best of the series. It is carried through with more foresight, with a more continuing comprehension of where the mezzotint will need support, than some of the others. In most of the plates some passage is left to the scraper which clearly asks for line ; here the only thing of the sort is a little bit of the main group of trees, where some ambiguity between cloud and foliage might have been avoided by a few strokes of the point. Turner is said to have hated trees and the trouble they gave him. The success with which he used them in *Liber* was due, no doubt, mainly to the process employed. Trees with their intimate commingling of tone and contour, of silhouette and mass, call for the alliance of broad tones with line. Skies, mountains, sweeps of foreground or water, might be rendered with mezzotint alone. Line indeed is an embarrassment to all these, and is introduced by Turner more for the sake of keeping a print under one skin than because it was locally required. His apparent principle was to etch when one object had to stand in silhouette against another, but elsewhere to restrain his point to what harmony and balance demanded. Hence it is not difficult to see why, speaking broadly, the plates in which trees play a large part are best. Reticent with the point as Turner was in most of the treeless subjects, he was hardly reticent enough, and not a few of them would have been improved by a franker trust in the scraper. I would even go further, and say that most of the plates in which no trees or other things with cutting silhouettes occur, would have been finer had there been no etching at all. The "Peat Bog, Scotland," and "Martello Towers near Bexhill" are good instances. In both of these line was demanded by the figures and other detached objects in the foreground, but all the landscape parts might have been left entirely to mezzotint. The mountains, and even

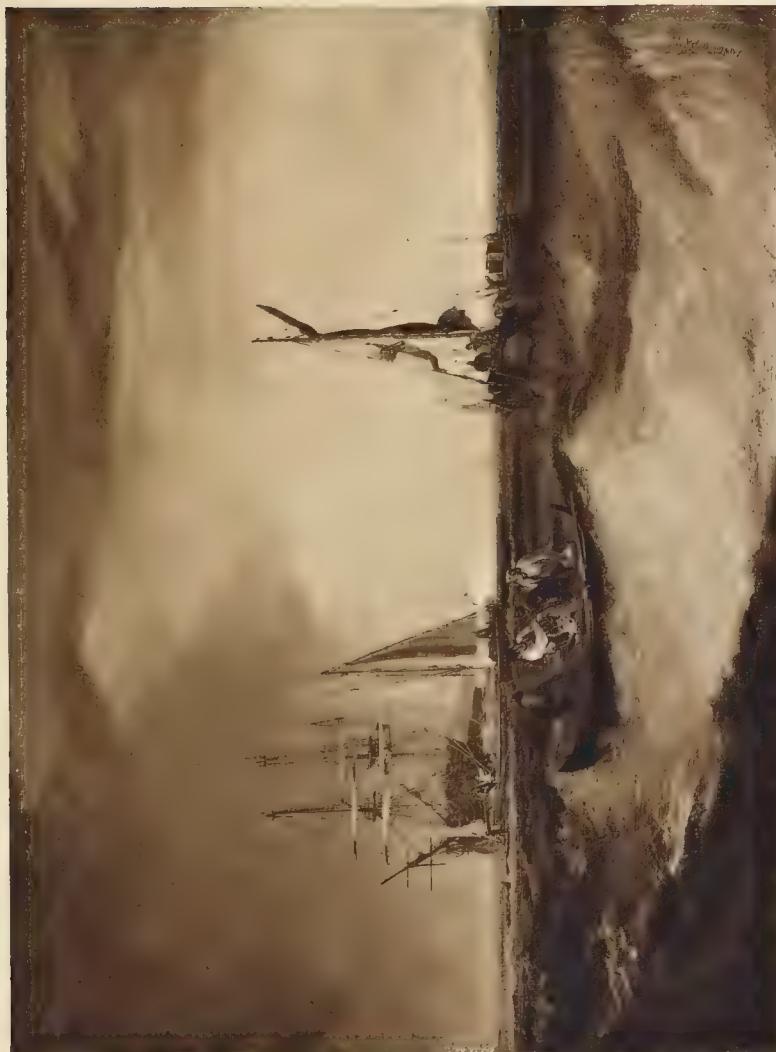


THE NORE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(35 x 48)

In the Collection of
GEORGE J. GOULD, Esq.



LIBER STUDIORUM

the morass, in the former, the white cliff in the latter, seem too essentially matters of tone for the intrusion of ink ridges, which are almost as much out of place as they would have been in the sky.

I have included the "Holy Island Cathedral" among the best etchings in the *Liber*. Simple as it is, and comparatively bare of those signs of thought and intention in which most of the plates are so rich, it appeals to me, at least, by its unity—by the harmony in which its two ingredients work together to a common conclusion. Each fulfils exactly its own function, and neither encroaches in the slightest degree on the other. Both engraver and etcher have done their best, and their best, for its purpose, is very good. In this plate Turner's line has the robustness of Prout and something of the nerve of Méryon, while the conception as a whole has an Egyptian dignity. The closeness with which failure in art treads on the heels of success may again be seen by comparing this plate with No. 39, "The Crypt of Kirkstall Abbey." This is one of the plates entirely due to the painter's own hand. Even the biting, I suspect, is his, for the tendency of the professional etcher would be the reverse of what we see here. The bitings have been too few, consequently the lines, from the nearest parts of the vault to the farthest, are too equal in value. Turner's heart was not in this plate. It contains several *pentimenti*, or rather mistakes, which he was not at the pains to erase, and we can see that he shirked the trouble of working out the complex chiaroscuro problem he had set himself. It is a pity, for with more careful execution it would have been one of the best of the series. Even as it is, it is much better than the third abbey, the "Rivaulex," in which a forced and melodramatic scheme of light and shadow is draped on a clumsy and, in parts, incomprehensible skeleton of etching.

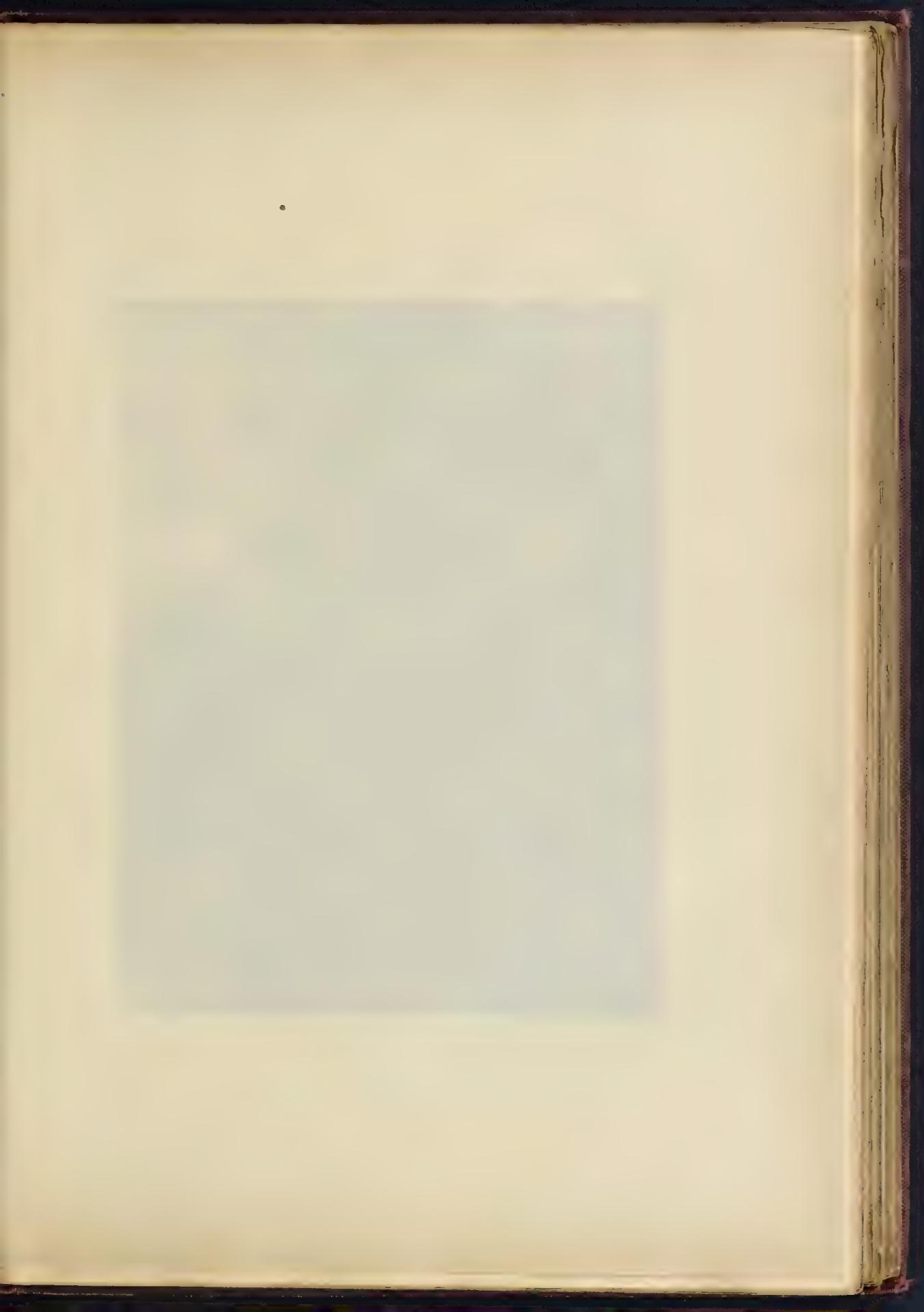
I have discussed *Liber* chiefly from the æsthetic standpoint—

TURNER

from the standpoint of one who asks whether line and chiaroscuro are used in it for their proper and peculiar purposes, and whether they are so employed that in each case a real unity has been reached. It is easier to answer the second question in the affirmative than the first. A few of the plates, no doubt—"Pembury Mill," "Juvenile Tricks," "Young Anglers," for example—have no particular meaning in their arrangement, while a few others—"Farmyard with Cock," "Lauffenburg," "Rivaulex"—are forced, mechanical, and drawing-mastery in their division of light and shade. These, however, are exceptions, and on the whole an extraordinary grip on the constituents of natural beauty marks the series. As our eyes move from one plate to another we feel our emotions focussed as they are by perfect scenes in nature. Looking into them for the poetry of execution, for the evidence of the virtuoso's intense sympathy with his materials, our satisfaction becomes less.

In pictures there are two poetries—the poetry of Art and the poetry of Nature; and the poetry of Art is the higher of the two, for it is distilled from the masterpiece of Nature, the brain of man at its best. Now Turner's poetry is the poetry of Nature, transferred and re-arranged, but still recognizable as Nature's own property and creation. Compare the most moving of his *Liber* compositions, say the "Procris and Cephalus," with the design by Cotman known as "Breaking the Clod."* Before the latter we feel no impulse to analyse, to trace the origin of any detail, to refer to Nature and collate. We accept the whole as it is, and feel it touching our spirits with its creator's mood in a tense directness. Over a Turner, disquisition is never impertinent. We can always busy ourselves with its relation to the external fact, which remains to the end its *raison d'être*. No better proof need be sought that Turner was essentially an illustrator than the temptation to signalise

* A reproduction has been published by the Autotype Company. The original black-and-white drawing is in the collection of Mr. Reeve, of Norwich.



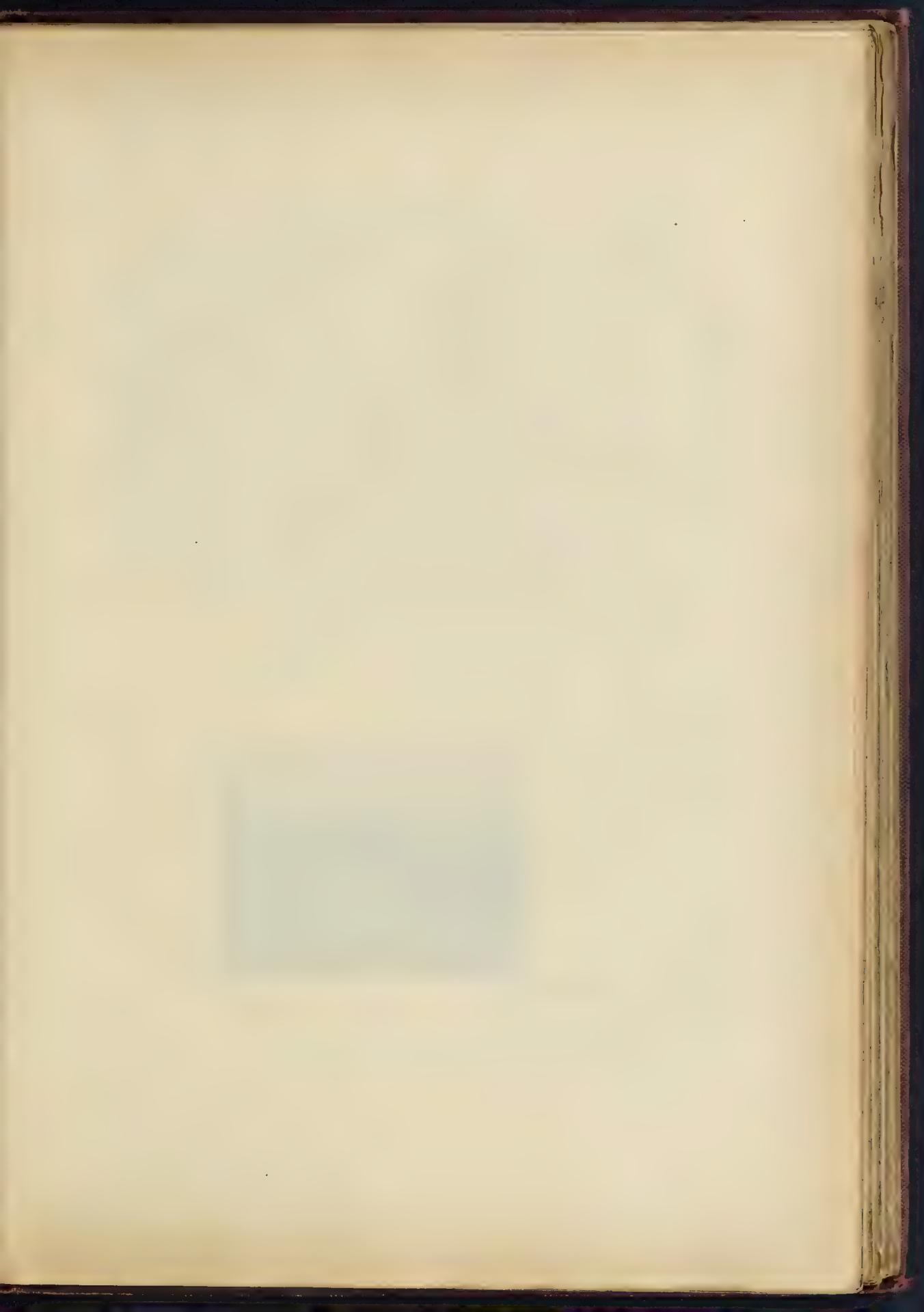
IVY BRIDGE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(35 x 47)

In the Collection of
PANDELI RALLI, Esq.





ON THE MOSELLE.

From the Water Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

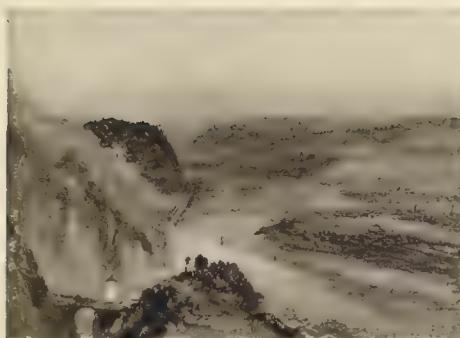
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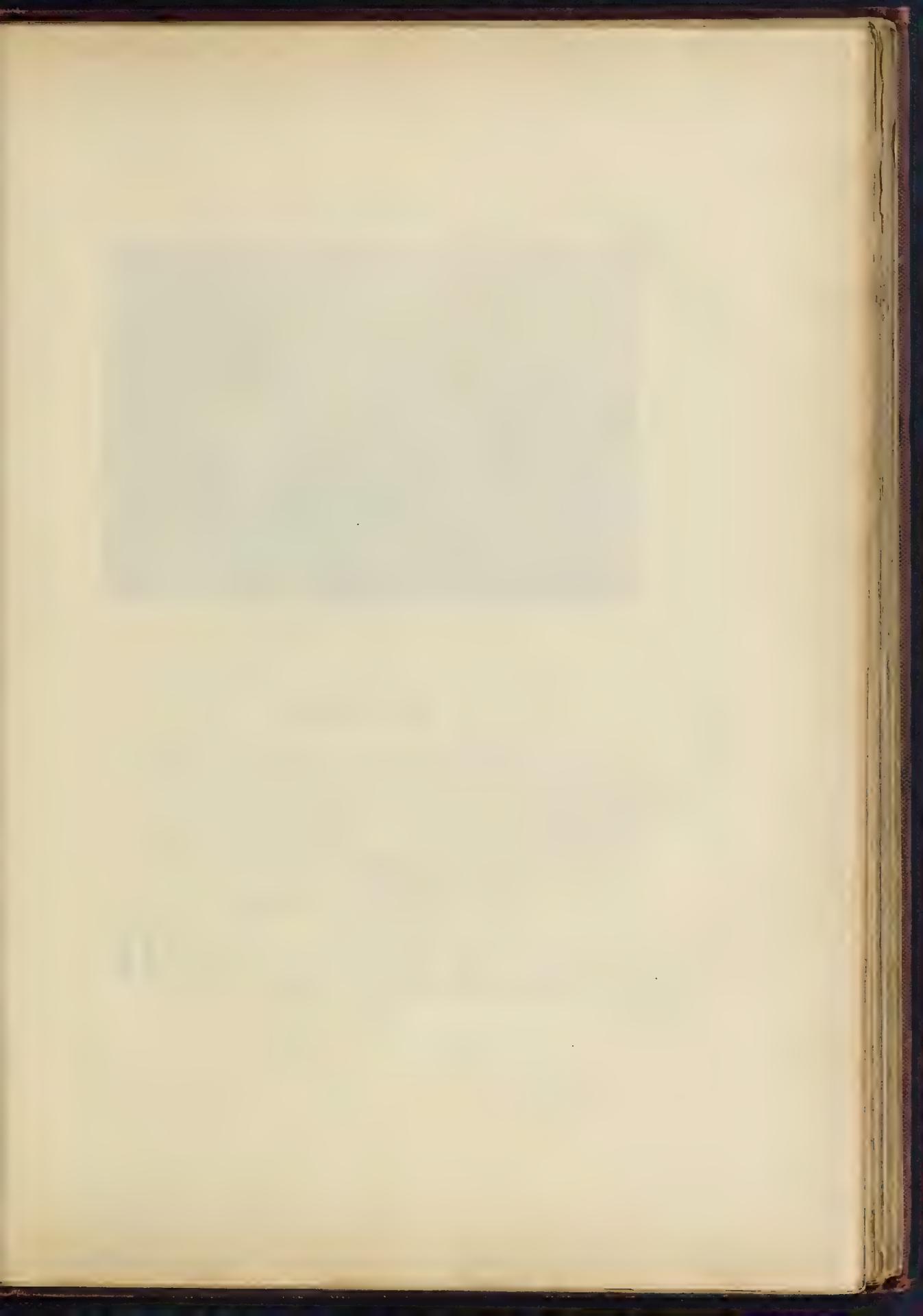
In the Collection of
W. G. RAWLINSON, Esq.

LIBER STUDIORUM

the points of contact between his art and the nature from which it springs, which everyone feels who thinks about him at all. Before the Cotman we are pricked by no such desire. Like a Rembrandt or a Titian, it presents its own title to existence ; it demands no labour of reminiscence or comparison, before its full meaning and value can be realised. Whether *Liber* declares Turner's own conclusions about man in nature with the frankness insisted on by Ruskin in a famous passage,* we may, of course, doubt. Art rather than despair makes a painter prefer broken-down mills to flourishing factories ; riven and blasted trees to smug saplings, prosperous and cabbagy ; gnarled old hedgers and ditchers to straight young farmers. But although we need not accept these threescore and ten plates as Turner's full confession, they do contain a view of life, and their unity depends on the wakefulness with which its details are watched and steeped in a prevailing sentiment.

* "Modern Painters," Vol. V., pp. 336 *et seq.* (ed. 1888).





TOURS.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(5½ x 7½)

UNIVERSITY GALLERIES, OXFORD.



CHAPTER V.

Turner's life from 1805 to 1820—Elected Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy—The happiest years of his life—Friendship with Walter Fawkes—Visits to Farnley—Exhibition of his Drawings in Grosvenor Place—Death of Fawkes—Friendship with Lord Egremont and Visits to Petworth—William Frederick Wells and his Daughter, Mrs. Wheeler—The Trimmers of Heston—Alleged courtship of “Miss —” by Turner—Cyrus Redding; with Turner in Devon—Eastlake's Recollections of Turner—Robert James Graves: travels in Turner's company—Dealings with Cooke over the “Southern Coast”—Light they throw upon Turner's character.

BEFORE going on to discuss Turner's art during what I shall venture to call his experimental period, it will be convenient to complete what little has to be told of his private

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life during those years. I can only speak in generalities, for it has long been impossible—perhaps, indeed, it has never been possible since Turner died—to gather authentic details of how he passed the hours not actually spent in the studio. All the doings of his we really know would fill but a very little part of his seventy-six years. His life was probably more, rather than less, full of little cares and worries than usual; and I think the instinctive picture we all form of a man's pre-occupations would in his case be exceptionally inaccurate. More than most artists, no doubt, Turner lived in his art. The wrenching of his mind from matters connected with paint was even more of a waking from dreams, of a turning away from pleasant Spanish castles to squalid realities, than with others into whose brains a vivid imagination has been mixed. Picture him turning his eyes from the growing glory of the "Polyphemus" to listen to the woes of Hannah Danby, or from the patriotic fervour of the "Téméraire" to concoct excuses for slipping away to Mrs. Booth, at Margate, and you will shudder at the contrasts involved in his scheme of life. In such a see-saw the mental pleasures must surely have been at the sunny end of the beam, and the gorgeous life of the imagination, self-sufficing, and revolving in a splendid cycle of observation, conception, and realization, must have stood up as the better part before the painter's eyes.

Enough has now been said of the *dessous* of Turner's career to ensure that its effect on his art and visible personality shall not be ignored. What we have to remember is that the painter who, above all others, watched, investigated, and reproduced the phenomena of external nature, did not confine his curiosity to mountains, skies, and seas, but followed it through such byways as only a Rops and a Maupassant have publicly ventured into. At page 313 of his 1877 edition, Thornbury gives an account of how Turner spent his week-ends, to which I may refer as completing the indications

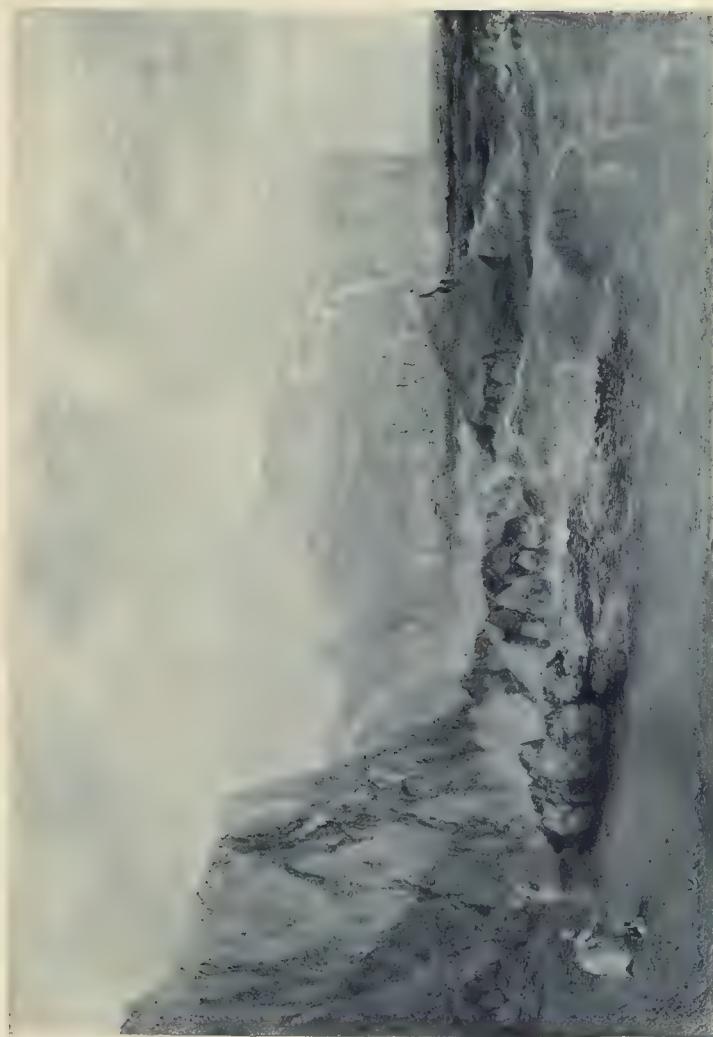


SCARBOROUGH.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

10 · 15⁸

In the Collection of
C. MORLAND AGNEW, Esq.



PROFESSOR OF PERSPECTIVE

afforded by his notions of domestic comfort. A biography is nothing if not real, says Monkhouse in referring to this very question, and it would be absurd to ignore, or even to slur over, one of the most masterful strains in any individuality into which it intrudes. Having referred to it, however, and insisted sufficiently on its presence, we may henceforth leave the reader to picture for himself the effect of an irregular household and still more irregular connections outside it on a passionate, generous, and distrustful soul like that of Turner.

In 1808 Turner was elected Professor of Perspective to the Royal Academy, an honour he accepted with gravity, and the duties of which he made serious attempts to fulfil, if not to create! His inexact habit of mind would have made him a bad teacher of such a science even if he had mastered it himself. But a very short examination of any picture or drawing of his in which architecture is an important feature is enough to show that his real knowledge of perspective was confined to a few of its more easily mastered principles. Trace, for example, the edge of a cast shadow over a Gothic front, and you will have to confess that he was quite unable to lay out its course over the hills and hollows.* And yet he attempted to lecture on the more advanced and mathematical branches of the subject. It is possible that he may have had clearer ideas in his mind than those he managed to convey, whether in words or with his pencil, and that his practical mistakes sprang rather from indifference than from ignorance. But on the whole it seems more probable that he had been poring over some treatise on perspective as he did over Ovid, and that both his election to the professorship and his attempts to fulfil its duties, were suggested by a characteristic pleasure in a half-comprehension of

* Instances may be found in most of Turner's more elaborate drawings, such as the "Salisbury Spire, from the South," in the Victoria and Albert Museum, or the "Worcester" in the British Museum. Among the scores of pocket-books in the tin boxes of the National Gallery, there is one of curious interest, in which the pages are divided between incomprehensible exercises in perspective and erotic verse!

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what he had read. He took a childish pride in his office, and was accustomed for years to append the letters P.P. to his name, and to set out his title in full in the Academy Catalogue.

The early years of the nineteenth century were probably the happiest in Turner's life. It was during those years that he made nearly all the friends who were neither official, on the one hand, like his colleagues of the Academy, nor, on the other, of a class to be kept as much as possible out of sight. The family of Dr. Whitaker; the Fawkeses, of Farnley; William Frederick Wells, the President of the Old Water-Colour Society, and, we are told, the "onlie begetter" of the *Liber Studiorum*; Mrs. Wheeler, Wells' daughter; the Trimmers, of Heston; and Lord Egremont;—among people like these he spent the hours which were not given to his families, his painting, or his foreign tours. As time went on his peculiar domestic arrangements must have become more and more embarrassing—for his amours were by no means childless—and must have reduced his facilities of intercourse with his friends. Down to about 1825, the glimpses we catch of the man himself are mostly reassuring, and seem to point to an individual happy on the whole and full of interest in life, although set apart to some extent from his fellow creatures by a want of constitutional balance, by an absence of that correlation of faculties which enables a man to walk serenely along the high road, and even in the bye-paths of life. In 1825 died Walter Fawkes, and a change in Turner can be traced, or rather divined, from that year. We have less direct evidence as to the relations between the two men than we should like, but we know that so great was Turner's affection for Fawkes, and so deep his regret for his loss, that he would never return to Farnley after 1825, in spite of many pressing invitations from his friend's children. During the first quarter of the century his visits were constant, and were often so long as to outgrow all right to the title. Nearly the



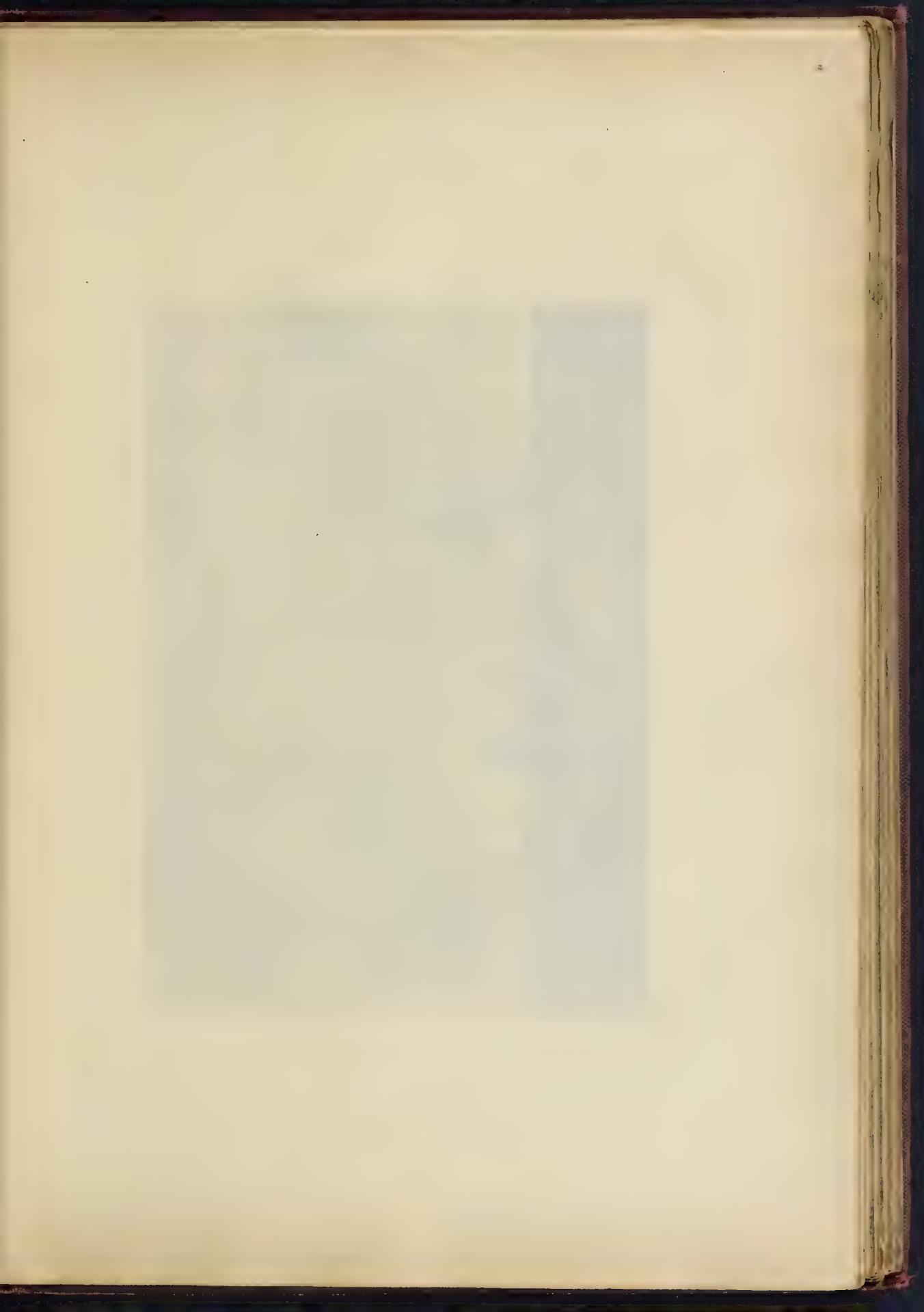
TIVOLI: A COMPOSITION.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(26 x 30)

In the Collection of
SIR JAMES JOICEY, Bart., M.P.





THE MEUSE: ORANGE MERCHANTMAN GOING TO PIECES
ON THE BAR.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(67 94)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



FARNLEY

whole summer of 1816 was spent there. He was invariably a guest at all family functions, and a pathetic illustration of the love between himself and Fawkes is afforded by the fact, that during the last few weeks of the Squire's life, when Fawkes came to London to consult the doctors in the early months of 1825, Turner dined twelve times with him in Grosvenor Place. Farnley Hall has been called Turner's shrine. The figure, perhaps, is not very exact, but it expresses what the visitor feels when he first makes acquaintance with the place. It is a picturesque house, lying well above the Wharfe, about seven miles from Harrogate, and between the extremities of two long spurs reaching down to the Wharfe from the moors. In architecture it is Jacobean impaled—as a herald might say—with eighteenth-century renaissance. You go in through low-browed picturesque rooms, panelled and carved, into the light loftiness of the Adam tradition at least, if nothing more. Two of these modern rooms are consecrated to Turner. One is hung round with drawings, in the other three great oil pictures, "Dordrecht," "Rembrandt's Daughter," and an unnamed "Sea Piece," decorate the walls, while the tables groan under albums and solander cases filled with smaller things, and those studies of birds which so moved the soul of Ruskin. Standing in the window of the saloon, the room with the framed water colours, you may look across the valley, in which the Wharfe meanders round many Turners, to the long hill on which those clouds gathered that gave the painter his first hint for "Hannibal crossing the Alps." The whole scene is at once intensely English and intensely Turner. The only thing which does something to lessen our pleasure is the prosperity of Otley, two miles away, which sends smoke and waftures of some mysterious aroma to filter through the oaks and beeches of the Wharfe. Before 1890 the Farnley collection was completer than it is now, for in that year many of the Rhine drawings on grey grounds were sold, as well as other things.

TURNER

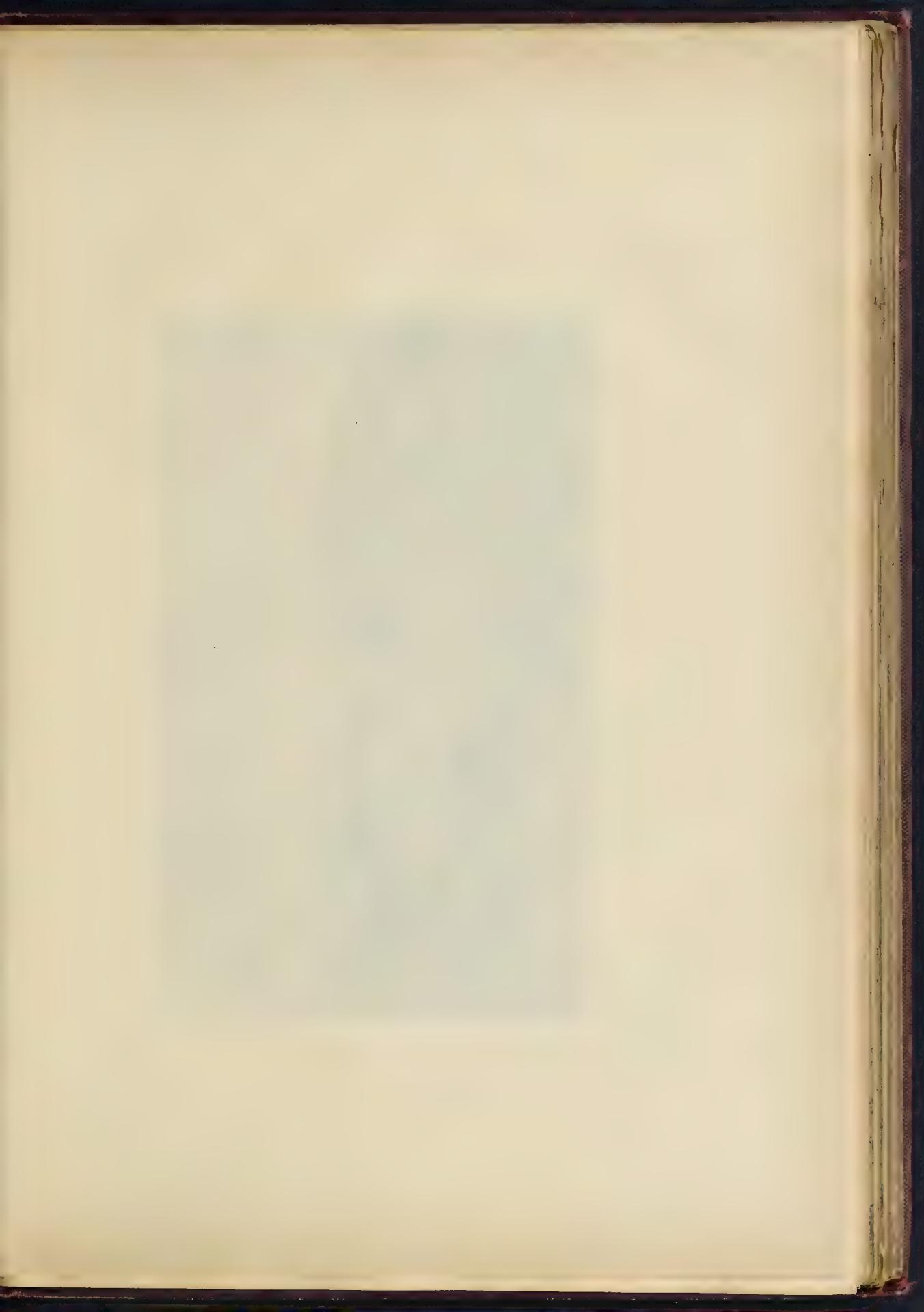
If Walter Fawkes, or either of his two wives, had been inoculated with a drop of Boswellian ichor, we might have really known Turner. They had opportunities denied to everyone else, for they united practical intimacy with that essential difference of origin which makes observation detached and keen. The second Mrs. Fawkes did keep a diary, but it merely records the comings and goings of the painter among those of other people, and conveys little information beyond enabling us to see that he was almost a member of the family. An entry in 1816 records, however, that Mr. and Mrs. Fawkes and Turner visited Craven together, and that from Skipton the painter went on a sketching tour. Two years later we find the Fawkeses at Eton on the Fourth of June, "to see the boat race; little Turner went with us." No mention of the painter occurs after the death of Walter Fawkes, although the diary goes on to 1838.

On the 13th of April, 1819, Fawkes opened an exhibition in his Grosvenor Place house of all the water-colour drawings he possessed. A posthumous catalogue—if I may call it so—was compiled as a memorial. The copy at Farnley has a sort of Frontispiece by Turner, composed on much the same lines as that of the *Liber Studiorum*, and also views of the exhibition rooms, one by Turner, the other, I think, by another hand. The catalogue included a dedication to Turner as well as "extracts from the observations on Mr. Fawkes' collection of water-colour drawings made in the daily papers and other publications during the months of May and June, 1819." These extracts now make strange reading, but they show, at least, that the painter was recognized as a great artistic force even by the daily critic of eighty years ago. The dedication is affectionate and graceful:—

To J. M. W. TURNER, Esq., R.A., P.P.

MY DEAR SIR,

The unbought and spontaneous expression of the public opinion respecting my collection of water-colour drawings, decidedly points out to whom this little catalogue should be inscribed.

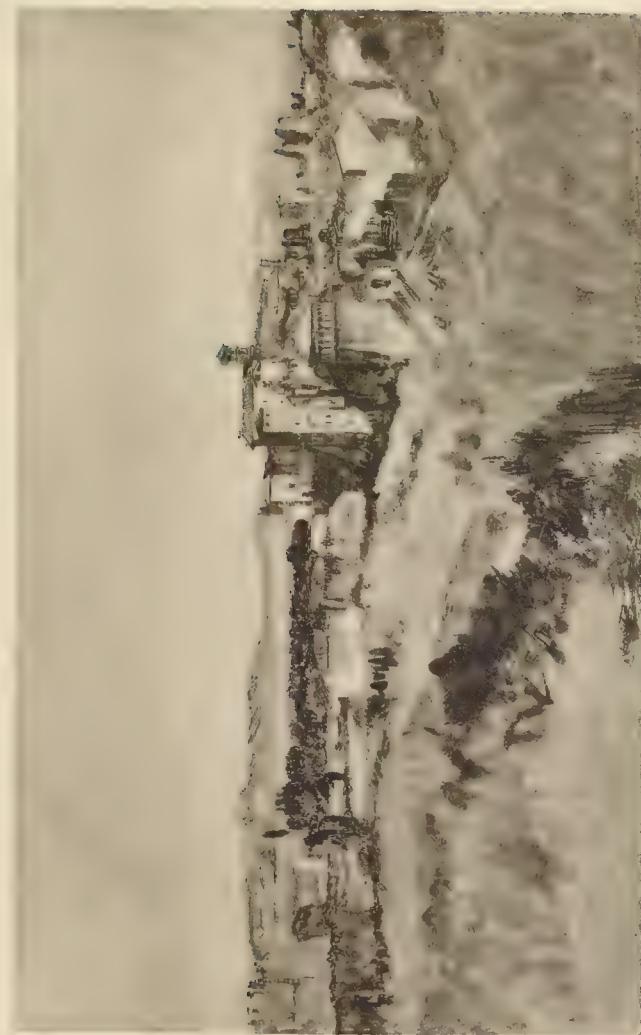


ROME: CHURCH AND CONVENT OF SS. GIOVANNI
E PAULO.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(89 — 144)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY



WALTER FAWKES

To you, therefore, I dedicate it, first as an act of duty ; and, secondly, as an offering of Friendship ; for, be assured, I never can look at it without intensely feeling the delight I have experienced, during the greater part of my life, from the exercise of your talent and the pleasure of your society.

That you may year after year reap an accession of fame and fortune is the anxious wish of

Your sincere friend,

LONDON, *June, 1819.*

W. FAWKES.

The exhibition filled the first floor of number 45, Grosvenor Place, the house which now bears the number 35. The first two rooms contained drawings by Havell, Robson, Heaphy, Hills, Prout, Varley, Fielding, De Wint, and others ; the third was reserved to Turner. The exhibition was free to the public one day in each week, and visitors had frequent opportunities, we are told by William Carey,* of seeing the painter moving about the rooms, the principal figure in his own triumph. The exhibition was a great success, and Grosvenor Place, then hardly the ultra-fashionable quarter it has since become, blazed for weeks with beauty and fashion.

In an unpublished essay on Turner at Farnley, of which I have been generously permitted to make use, Mrs. Ayscough Fawkes says that of all the Turner traditions handed down in the family, none is more positive than that which declares that with one deeply interesting exception, no one ever saw him paint when he was there. His own room was his studio, and there he shut himself up. The exception had to do with the fine drawing of "A First Rate taking in Stores." One morning at breakfast Fawkes asked Turner to make him a drawing which would give a correct idea of the size of a ship of the line. The notion

* "Some Memoirs of the Patronage and Progress of the Fine Arts in England and Ireland, etc., with Anecdotes of Lord de Tabley and other patrons, and of eminent Artists."—London, 1826. Besides the Turners, the collection contained examples of Gilpin, Garrard, Cooper, Smith, Glover, De Wint, Heaphy, Hills, Nicholson, Cristall, Clennell, Fielding, Robson, Atkinson, Varley, Prout, and two amateurs, whose names are carefully printed in the Catalogue as "E. Swinburne, Esq., " and "J. Ibbetson, Esq., " like 'gentlemen' among 'players' at a cricket match.

TURNER

pleased Turner, and calling to the eldest boy, Hawkesworth, a lad of fifteen, "Come along, Hawkey, we will see what we can do for Papa," the pair went off to the painter's room and there sat elbow to elbow until the drawing was complete. Two more very interesting facts are re-told by Mrs. Fawkes on the same authority. According to one of these, a Guercino—"Pallas and Arachne"—which still hangs in the Farnley Library was borrowed by Turner and retained by him for many years, his object being to make use of its figures in his own classical pictures. The other story is that one day the painter was standing before the house looking at the hill in front, which was under a heavy thundercloud. He called to his host, and pointing to the hill, said: "You will see that again; it will be called 'Hannibal crossing the Alps.'" A last story: One of the daughters of Walter Fawkes, with insinuating eye, showed Turner a drawing of her own: all he said was, "Put it in a jug of water,"—excellent if unwelcome advice, as she afterwards discovered.

Some of Turner's labours at Farnley were of a less dignified kind than making drawings at large. Walter Fawkes was a Grangerizer *acharné*, one of his achievements being a History of England in pictures, in several volumes. For this purpose many valuable books were cut up, Meyrick's "Ancient Armour," Strutt's "Dress and Habits of the People of England," Lodge's "Portraits," etc., and for each volume Turner designed a Frontispiece. The famous bird drawings* had a somewhat similar origin. They were made for a book on the plumage of birds, by Major Fawkes, Walter's brother. Turner helped to provide his own models for these drawings. He took out a gun on Farnley Moor, and there shot a cuckoo!†

In the early months of 1825 the Fawkes family came earlier than

* Ruskin told the Rev. W. Kingsley that he would rather possess the drawing of a "dead ring-dove than the Chamouni."

† See *post*, Chapter IX.

LORD EGREMONT

usual to London, in consequence of the serious state of health of its head. Late in the same summer Turner had lost his friend.

I have dwelt at length on the Farnley part of Turner's career, as for some reason not easily understood most writers have said so little about it. Cosmo Monkhouse, whose death we have had to lament during the passage of these sheets through the press, barely mentions it in his otherwise admirable notice in the "Dictionary of National Biography," while the little he does say suggests that his ideas were not clear on the chronology of Turner's friendship with Fawkes. The change which took place in Turner's character—in the impression he made upon his friends and in the sentiment which governs his art—at about his fiftieth year, coincides with the death of Walter Fawkes, and may well have been caused by grief and by the loss of such healthy companionship.

Not, of course, that Fawkes was singular in the value of his friendship to Turner. The sympathy between the painter and himself was deeper in kind and more extensive in quantity—it called, we may guess, for more toleration—than that of others. But in those days Turner must, on the whole, have been an agreeable person to have in a house—if the house were big enough. For his visits to Lord Egremont were on much the same footing as those to Walter Fawkes. The scenery of Petworth was less to his mind than that of Wharfedale, but he was made almost as much at home. He had his private studio, to which no one but Lord Egremont was admitted, and the intercourse between host and guest seems to have been both familiar and cloudless. Lord Egremont's nature was an ideal one for the position he held towards men like Turner, C. R. Leslie, Wilkie, Allston, and other artists. Where no contest of will was possible, his behaviour was perfect. He is described, moreover, as having strains in his character,* especially a shyness of the

* It is curious to read what Walpole says of Lord Egremont in the light of what we know of his later career. In 1780 he had been engaged to one of the beautiful Waldegraves, Lady Maria, and had been dismissed as a *fainéant* lover. Her uncle—loyal to his niece—calls him a most worthless young fellow, and holds him up generally to the odium of Sir Horace Mann.

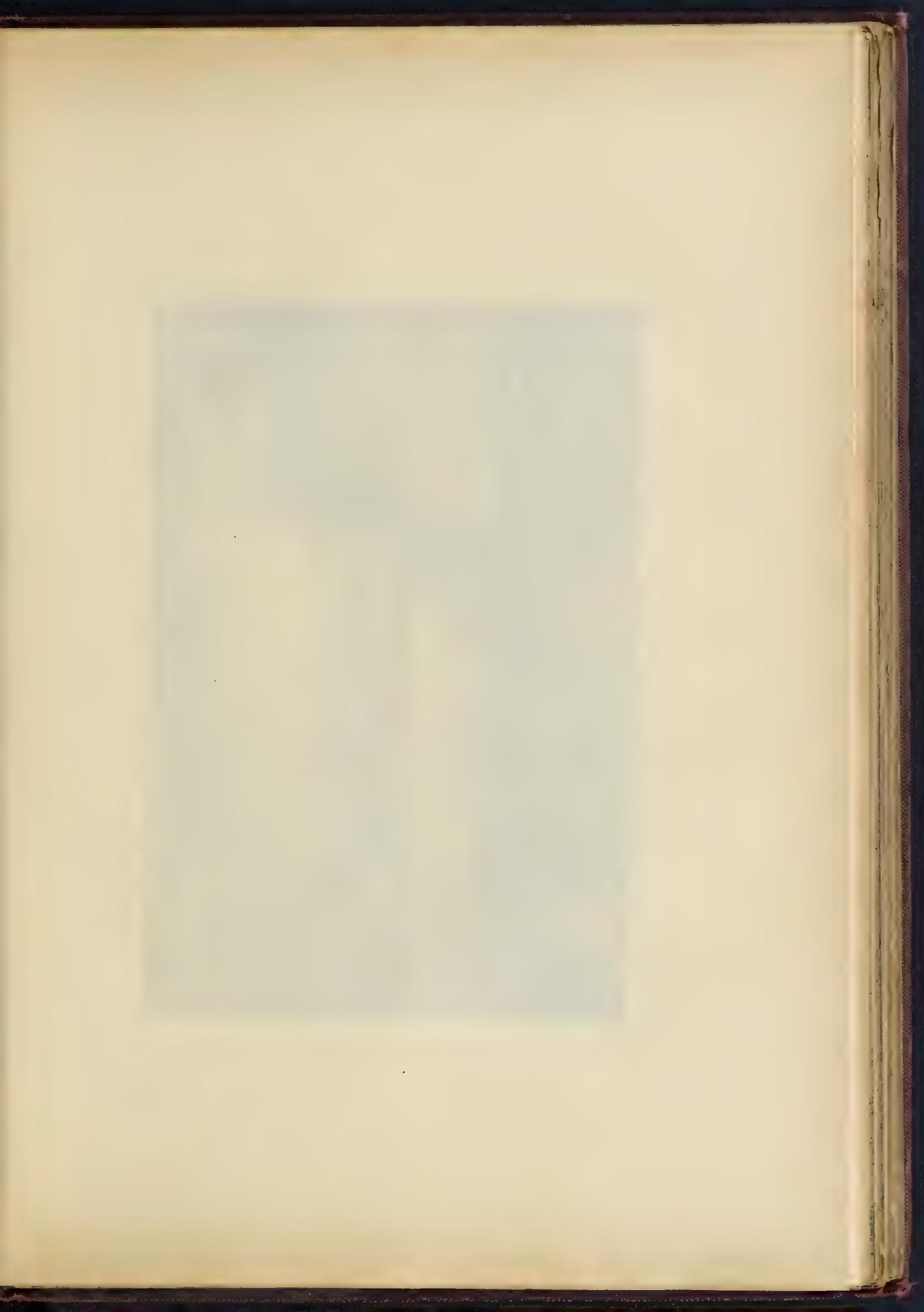
TURNER

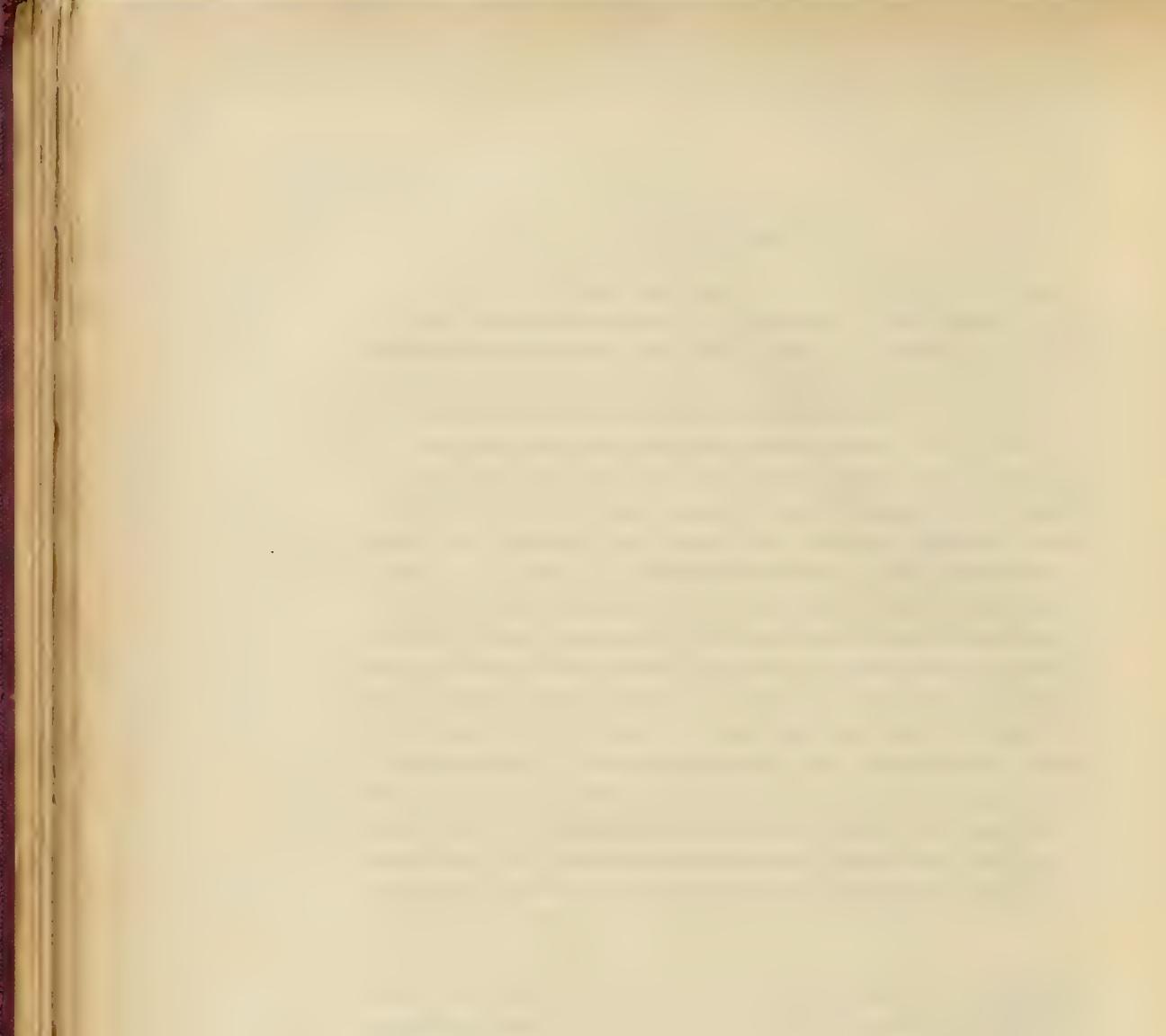
farouche kind, which must have given him a fellow feeling for Turner. His death, which took place in 1837, completed the work begun by the deaths of Walter Fawkes in 1825, and of Wells, the water-colour painter, in 1836, and left Turner with few controlling attachments, outside his *ex officio* friends, to the daily ways of refined society.

Here and there, in tracking out Turner's course through life, we come upon hints of some connection between himself and others which time has obscured. William Frederick Wells, for instance, went to school in the very house in Queen Anne Street afterwards occupied by the painter;* the name of the schoolmaster was Harper; while a Mrs. Harpur was Turner's maternal aunt, and the grandmother of his best known executor. I have attempted to follow up some of these indications, if such they be, but have invariably encountered that layer of impenetrable soil in which Turner's roots have a knack of disappearing. Judging from what little information we have, Wells came next to Fawkes in Turner's affection. Their friendship began early, and it seems to have been more securely buttressed than usual by sympathy between the painter and the junior members of his friend's family. The pages contributed by Mrs. Wheeler, Wells' daughter, to Thornbury's "Life," give a charming sketch of Turner as he appeared when among people who brought out his affection and trust.

"Turner loved my father with a son's affection; and to me he was an elder brother. Many are the times I have gone out sketching with him. I remember his scrambling up a tree to obtain a better view, and then he made a coloured sketch, I handing up his colours as he wanted them. . . . He was a firm affectionate friend to the end of his life; his feelings were seldom seen on the surface, but they were deep and enduring. No one would have imagined, under that rather rough and cold exterior, how very strong were the affections which lay hidden beneath. I have more than once seen him weep bitterly, particularly at the death of my own dear father (1836). . . . He came immediately to my house in an agony of tears. Sobbing like a child, he said, 'Oh, Clara, Clara! These are iron tears. I have lost the best friend I ever had in

* J. L. Roget: "History of the Old Water-Colour Society," vol. 1. p. 132. .





FOLKESTONE: TWILIGHT.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(17 256)

In the Collection of
EDWARD NETTLEFOLD, Esq.



THE TRIMMERS OF HESTON

my life.' . . . What a different man would Turner have been if all the good and kindly feelings of his great mind had been called into action! . . . He was by nature suspicious, and no tender hand had wiped away early prejudices, the inevitable consequences of a defective education. Of all the light-hearted, merry creatures I ever knew, Turner was the most so; and the laughter and fun that abounded when he was an inmate of our cottage was inconceivable, particularly with the juvenile members of the family."

Another of Turner's friendships was that with the Rev. Henry Scott Trimmer, Vicar of Heston. One of the painter's reasons for going to Hammersmith was to be near Loutherbourg—at least, so we are told—and he probably moved on to Twickenham under a similar impulse. His acquaintance with Trimmer began in 1810, through the latter's subscription for a print from one of the "Oxfords." Solus, or Sandycombe, Lodge is about four miles from Heston. Henry Scott Trimmer was the son of the famous Sarah Trimmer, who, again, was the daughter of Joshua Kirby, the painter and friend of Gainsborough, and the official rival for a year or two of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Henry Trimmer was a cultivated man, with a serious interest in art, and so the acquaintance with Turner soon ripened into friendship. Trimmer made an attempt, soon abandoned, to teach the painter Greek and Latin; he had, too, a kind of knowledge which is uncommon with painters, although it might be so useful. He had studied pigments, vehicles, and other practical matters from the more scientific side. Various stories, too, have come down to us of his skill as an artist, the most authentic, perhaps, telling us how one day Turner admired a sea piece hanging up at Heston. "I like that picture; there is a good deal in it. Where did you get it?" "I painted it," answered Trimmer. The artist turned away and never looked at nor alluded to the picture again. Thornbury also tells us that one of the Vicar's sons was being painted by Henry Howard, R.A., who was staying in the house for the purpose. The portrait did not "go"; Howard suggested to Turner, who was hovering round and making disparaging

TURNER

remarks, "You had better do it yourself!" On this, Turner said, "This is what I should do," and taking up the cat he wrapped its body in his red pocket-handkerchief, and put it under the boy's arm. The picture was made.

In nearly all the stories connected with the Heston family, Turner appears in a very human light. He used to go fishing with the younger Trimmers. Of this pastime he was so fond that, we are told, he "once stood with a long rod two whole days in a pouring rain under an umbrella, fishing in a small pond in the vicarage garden, without even a nibble." Mrs. Trimmer actually persuaded him to give her two of his drawings, he only stipulating that he should make replicas before giving them up. Lastly, one of the painter's two attempts at marriage is said to have been made on a friend of the Trimmers, the lady who afterwards became the wife of Henry Scott Trimmer's brother.* The story is curious. The true version seems to be the one told by Monkhouse. I must confess that the idea conveyed to me by a perusal of the following letter to Trimmer, senior—believed to be the only one he ever received from Turner†—is either that the painter was asking for an offer for Sandycombe, as Monkhouse thinks, or suggesting that "Miss ——" should marry his father!

TUESDAY, Aug. 1, 1815.

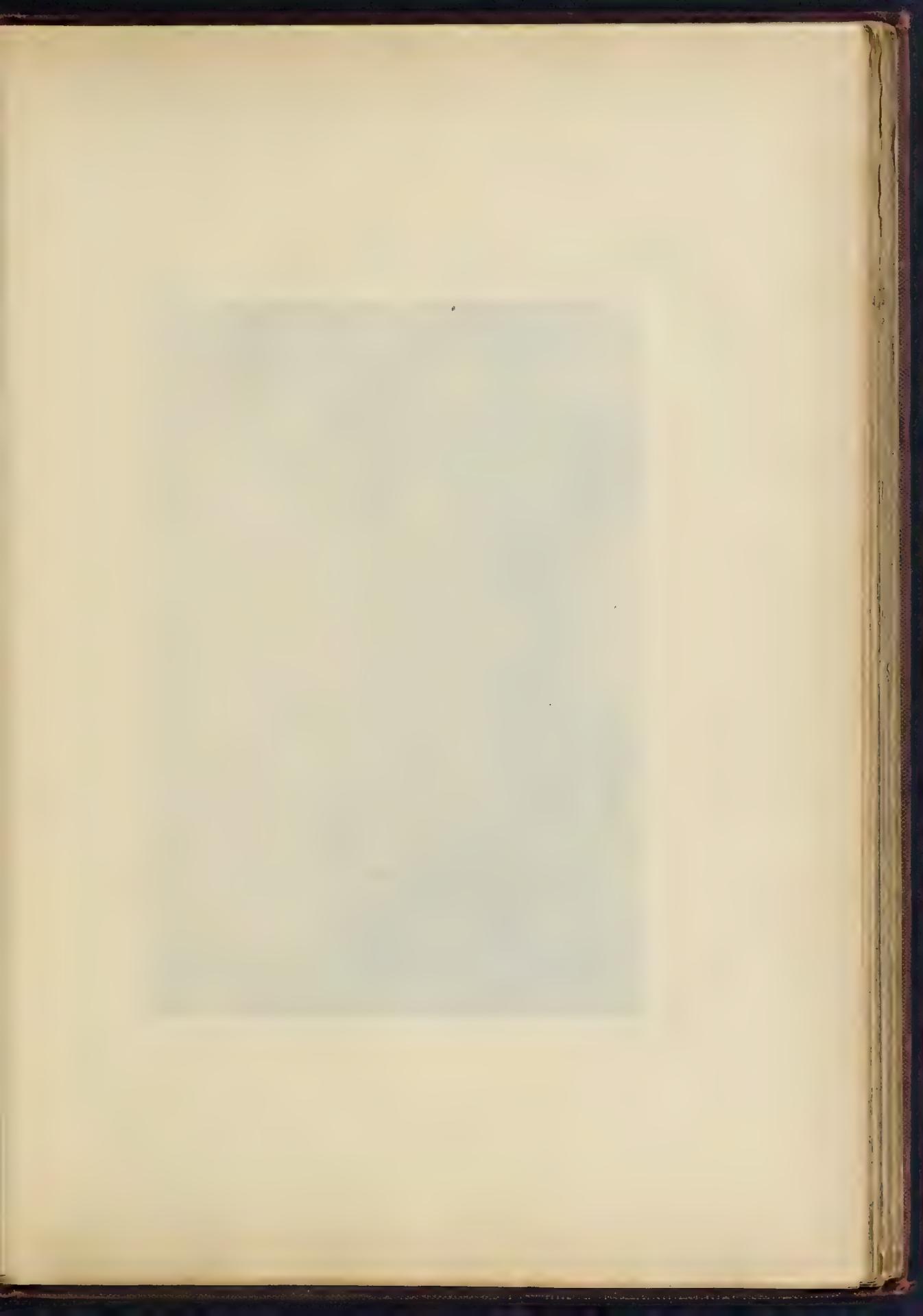
Queen Anne St.

MY DEAR SIR,

I lament that all hope of the pleasure of seeing you or getting to Heston—must for the present wholly vanish. My father told me on Saturday last, when I

* The other story belongs to his youth, and, I confess, seems to me incredible. We are told that he exchanged troth with the sister of a school friend at Margate, and then went off on his travels. He staid away two years, the letters between the two were intercepted, and when he returned he found the lady on the eve of marriage with another. The facts look very doubtful, and their meaning more dubious still.

† On this point, see p. 91 of Monkhouse's "Life," where he contradicts the story told by Thornbury that the Vicar's letters were burnt in sackfuls by his son. Thornbury was possibly confusing Trimmer with Fawkes, whose voluminous correspondence really was destroyed after his death.

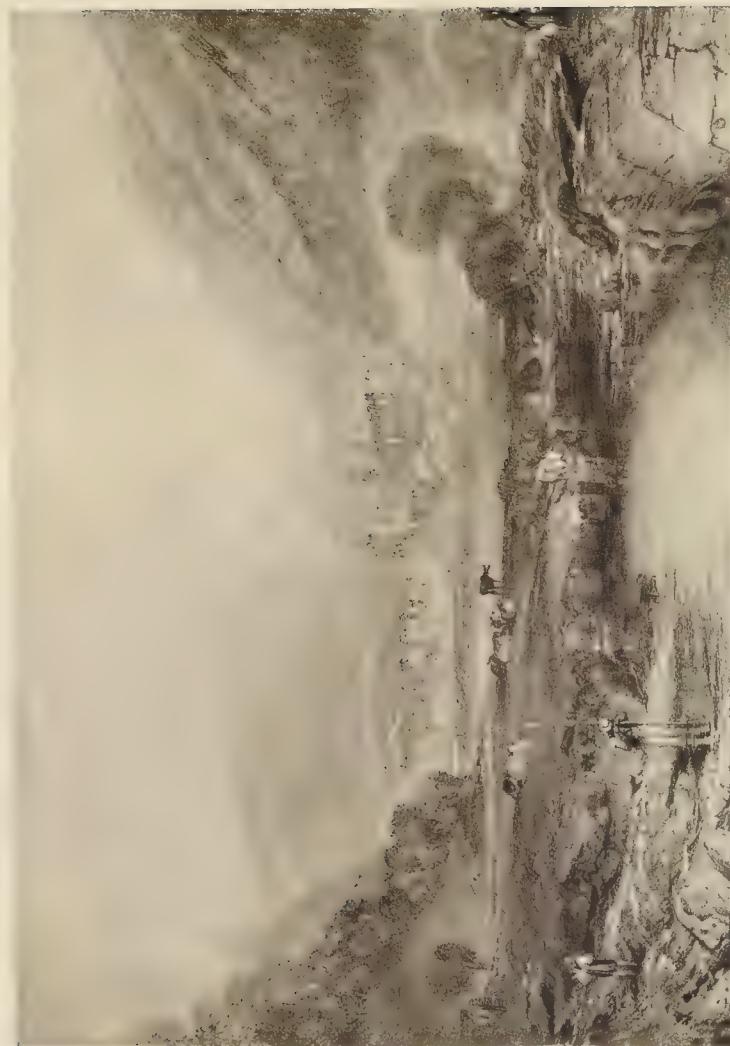


RIVAULX ABBEY.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

11 154)

In the Collection of
SIR DONALD CURRIE, G.C.M.G.



CYRUS REDDING

was as usual compelled to return to town the same day, that you and Mrs. Trimmer would leave Heston for Suffolk as to-morrow, Wednesday. In the first place I am glad to hear that her health is so far established as to be equal to the journey, and believe me your utmost hope for her benefiting by the sea air being fully realized will give me great pleasure to hear, and the sooner the better.

After next Tuesday—if you have a moment's time to spare—a line will reach me at Farnley Hall, near Otley, Yorkshire, and for some time, as Mr. Fawkes talks of keeping me in the North by a trip to the Lakes, etc., until November, therefore I suspect I am not to see Sandycombe. Sandycombe sounds just now in my ears as an act of folly, when I reflect how little I have been able to be there this year, and less chance, perhaps, for the next in looking forward to a continental excursion, and poor Daddy seems as much plagued with weeds as I am with disappointments, that if Miss —— would but waive bashfulness, or—in other words—make an offer instead of expecting one—the same might change occupiers—but not to tease you further, allow me, with most sincere respects to Mrs. Trimmer and family, to consider myself

Your most truly obliged

J. M. W. TURNER.

Cyrus Redding, to whom we owe so many charming peeps at Turner,* tells a story of his sudden admiration for a handsome woman he met at a party; she struck him so much that he whispered to a friend, “If she would marry me, I would give her a hundred thousand !”

Nearly all that Redding has to say about Turner is pleasant. The two first met during that tour in Devonshire when the painter made his only visit to the cradle of his race. During this tour Turner seems to have been but seldom alone. He made an excellent travelling companion. Discomforts were nothing to him. He sketched in open boats when his companions were all sea-sick. He slept as soundly on a hard chair at an inn, with his arms on a table, as in a down bed. He observed indefatigably, and made sketches in spite of wind and rain. He even shone as a host. During a stay with

* “Past Celebrities,” by Cyrus Redding, 2 vols. London: 1866.

TURNER

Mr. Collier, the father of the late Lord Monkswell, he gave a picnic, on a hill overlooking Plymouth Sound, providing "cold meats, shell fish, and good wines," and doing the whole thing in excellent taste. After their first meeting, Redding and Turner seem to have spent much time together, with the result that "Past Celebrities" contains the best picture we have of the artist as he appeared to the naked eye. It is a pity that his conversation is so meagrely reported, for in spite of the felicity with which he seizes upon the wrong word, Turner's talk, what we have of it, is always to the point. The following scrap has been quoted more than once, but will bear repetition:—

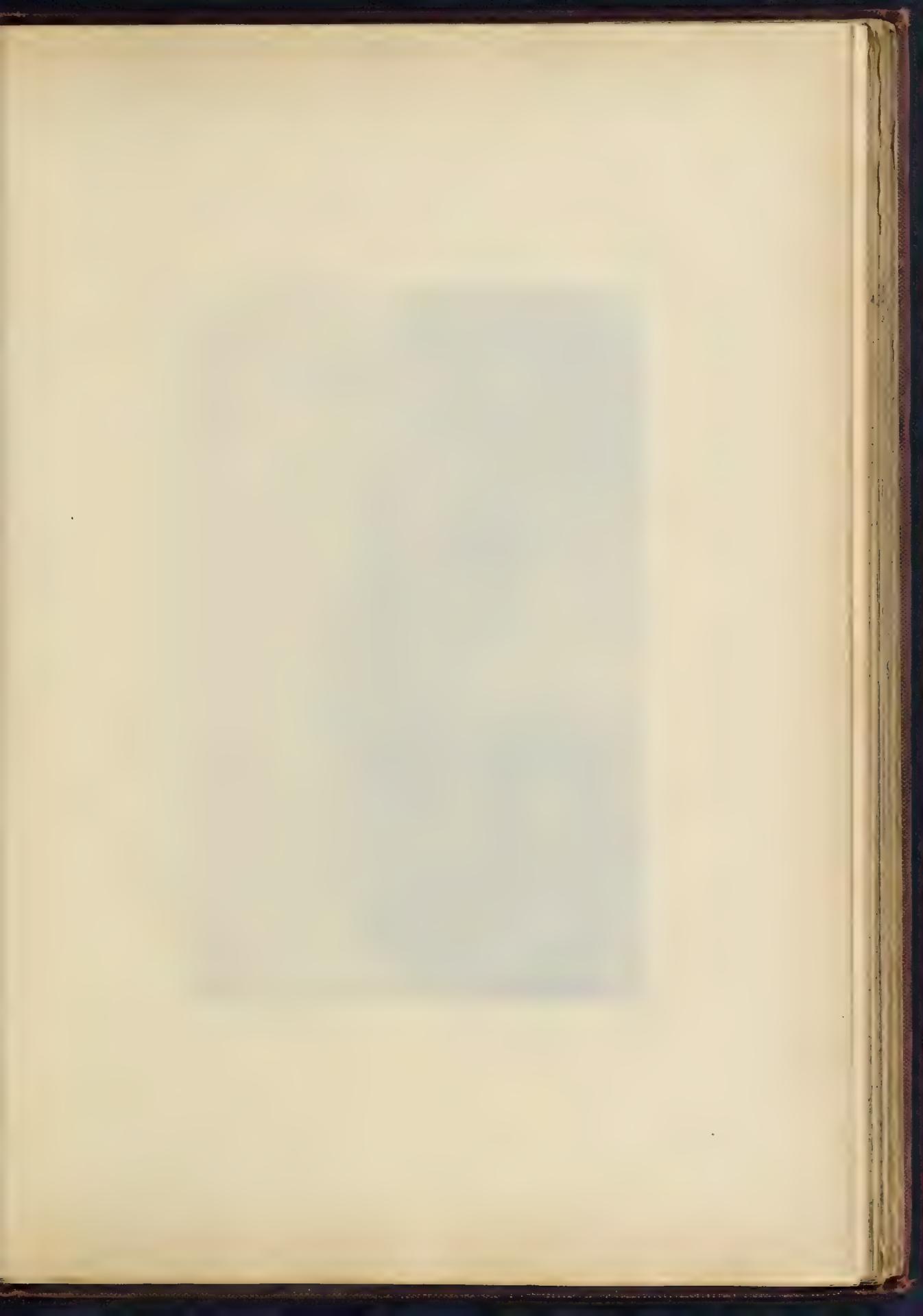
"He was looking at a seventy-four gun ship, which lay in the shadow under Saltash. The ship seemed one dark mass.

"'I told you that would be the effect,' said Turner, referring to some previous conversation. 'Now, as you perceive, it is all shade.'

"'Yes, I perceive it; and yet the ports are there.'

"'We can only take what is visible—no matter what may be there. There are people in the ship; we don't see them through the planks.'

After an account of the famous excursion to Burr Island, in Bigbury Bay, during which the painter behaved himself like a seasoned "tar," Redding goes on to say: "We slept at Kingsbridge. Turner and myself went early the next morning to Dodbrook to see the house in which Dr. Wolcot (Peter Pindar) was born, of which the artist took a sketch. We walked a good part of the way back. Next day we spent at Saltram (Lord Boringdon's). Though full of paintings by the great masters, and many landscapes of Zuccarelli, I could not extract a word about them from Turner. Stubbs' 'Phaeton and Runaway Horses,' in the billiard-room, he hardly noticed, except with the word 'fine.' As we were retiring to bed, the room in which I slept was hung with Angelica Kauffmann's man-woman paintings. I directed his attention to them as he



WINDSOR CASTLE.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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In the Collection of
R. E. TATHAM, Esq.



TOUR IN DEVON

passed my room to his own ; I received a 'Good night in your Seraglio.' . . . I was present at Devil's Point when he sketched the Sound, Mount Edgcumbe, Trematen Castle, Calstock, and scenes on the Tamar. . . . Turner said he had never seen so many natural beauties in such a limited spot of country as he saw there. He visited Mount Edgcumbe two or three times. . . . We visited Cothele together, where the furniture is of the time of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. The woods are fine, and the views of some of the headlands round which the river (the Tamar) winds are of exceeding beauty. In one place he was much struck, took a sketch, and . . . said : 'We shall see nothing finer than this if we stay till Sunday,* because we can't.' "

Sir Charles Eastlake furnished Thornbury with another account of this same tour, from which a few useful extracts may be made :—

" Turner made his sketches in pencil and by stealth. His companions, observing his peculiarity, were careful not to intrude upon him. After he returned to Plymouth . . . Mr. Johns fitted up a small portable painting-box, containing prepared paper and other necessary materials. When Turner halted at a scene and seemed inclined to sketch it, Johns produced the box, and the great artist, 'yielding to temptation,' immediately began to work . . . and after a few days he made his oil sketches freely in our presence. . . . Long afterwards the great painter sent Johns in a letter a small oil sketch, not painted from nature, as a return for his kindness and assistance. On my enquiring afterwards what had become of those sketches, Turner replied that they were worthless, in consequence, as he supposed, of some defect in the preparation of the paper; all the grey tints, he observed, had nearly disappeared. Although I did not implicitly rely upon that statement, I do not remember to have seen any of them afterwards."

A last anecdote of Turner as a traveller in search of the picturesque may be related here. During his Continental wanderings

* Another version says "sundown."

TURNER

in 1819-20 he foregathered with an Irish traveller, Robert James Graves, who was then upon his *Wanderjahre*, supplementing the knowledge of medicine he had acquired at home by visits to the schools of Germany, France and Italy. The story of the two men's companionship is thus told by the late Professor Stokes* :—

"Graves was travelling by diligence, when, in one of the post stations on the northern side of the Alps, a person took a seat beside him, whose appearance was that of the mate of a trading vessel. At first no conversation took place between them, but Graves' curiosity was soon awakened by seeing his fellow-traveller take from his pocket a notebook, across the pages of which his hand, from time to time, passed with the rapidity of lightning. Overcome at length by curiosity, and under the impression that his companion was perhaps insane, Graves watched him more attentively, and discovered that this untiring hand had been faithfully noting down the forms of the clouds which crossed the sky . . . and concluded that the stranger was no common man. Shortly afterwards the travellers entered into conversation, and the acquaintance thus formed soon became more intimate. They journeyed together, remaining for some time in Florence, and then proceeding to Rome. Graves was himself possessed of no mean artistic powers, and his sketches from nature are full of vigour and truth. He was one of the few men in whose company Turner is known to have worked. The writer has heard him describe how, having fixed on a point of view, he and his companion sat down, side by side, to their work. 'I used to work away,' he said, 'for an hour or more, and put down as well as I could every object in the scene before me (!), copying form and colour, perhaps as faithfully as was possible in the time. When our work was done, and we compared drawings, the difference was strange: I assure you there was not a single stroke in Turner's drawing that I could see like nature; not a line nor an object; and yet my work was worthless in comparison with his. The whole glory of the scene was there. . . .'

"At times, however, when they had fixed upon a point of view, to which they returned day after day, Turner would content himself on the first day with making one careful outline of the scene, and then, while Graves worked on, Turner would remain apparently doing nothing, till at some particular moment, perhaps on the third day, he would exclaim, 'There it is!' and seizing his colours, work rapidly till he had noted down the peculiar effect he wished to fix in his memory. It is a curious fact that these two remarkable men lived and travelled together for months without either of them inquiring the name of his comrade, and it was not until they reached Rome that Graves learned that his companion was the great artist."

* Biographical notice contributed by William Stokes, Regius Professor of Physic in the University of Dublin, to "Studies in Physiology and Medicine," by Robert James Graves. London, 1863, p. xi.



A SNOWDRIFT ON AN ALPINE PASS.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(21 - 29)

In the Collection of
S. G. HOLLAND, Esq.



ROBERT JAMES GRAVES

In a few of its details this glimpse of Turner shows him in a light not entirely consistent with other accounts. Sitting down to his work with an unidentified companion at his elbow is not the sort of proceeding we should expect from the Turner of Queen Anne Street, or even of Farnley and Petworth. In such points the tale may have been modified in passing from Graves to Stokes, and from Stokes to the printed page. In the main its truth is incontestable. I myself heard it from the lips of Graves' cousin, the late Dr. Robert Percival Graves, who referred me to the passage I have quoted. He completed the story as told by Stokes by an appendix which may seem more unlikely still to those who draw limits to human inconsistency. He assured me, and was confirmed by Miss Margaret Stokes, in whose house the conversation took place, that soon after their arrival in the Eternal City, Turner and Graves gave a joint entertainment—a dinner and so on—to their friends in Rome, and that Graves had the greatest difficulty in persuading the artist to allow him to pay his share of the reckoning. Turner was about twice the young medico's age, which gave him some right to be paternal. Hospitality on the part of Turner was a rare indulgence, but ten years before this he had given the picnic on the heights overlooking Plymouth Sound, already mentioned.*

A few years after the giddy honour of an Academy professorship had been conferred upon him, Turner entered into that engagement with Cooke, the publisher of the "Southern Coast," to which we owe so many of his best known drawings. Cooke's publication appeared between 1814 and 1826. It included forty plates after Turner. The connection between the two men was broken, like so

* This occurrence may have given birth to the ill-natured story, so often told on Thornbury's authority, of an opposite proceeding on the part of the artist. According to this reversed version, Turner, after staying for a day or two at a foreign hotel with a companion, levanted one fine morning while his friend was still asleep, telling the landlord that the slumberer would pay for both! Thornbury suggests that Turner was "taking a rise" out of his friend: a dangerous proceeding for one of his reputation in money matters!

TURNER

many of Turner's partnerships, by a quarrel over money. Late in 1826, Cooke proposed a continuation of the "Southern Coast," and asked for Turner's co-operation. The painter made such unreasonable demands that the proposal came to nothing. We may divine what occurred from a letter addressed by Cooke to Turner on the first day of 1827. This letter throws so strong a light on the painter's way of seeing things when his own pocket was concerned, that, long and well known as it is, it will have to be quoted:—

January 1, 1827.

DEAR SIR,

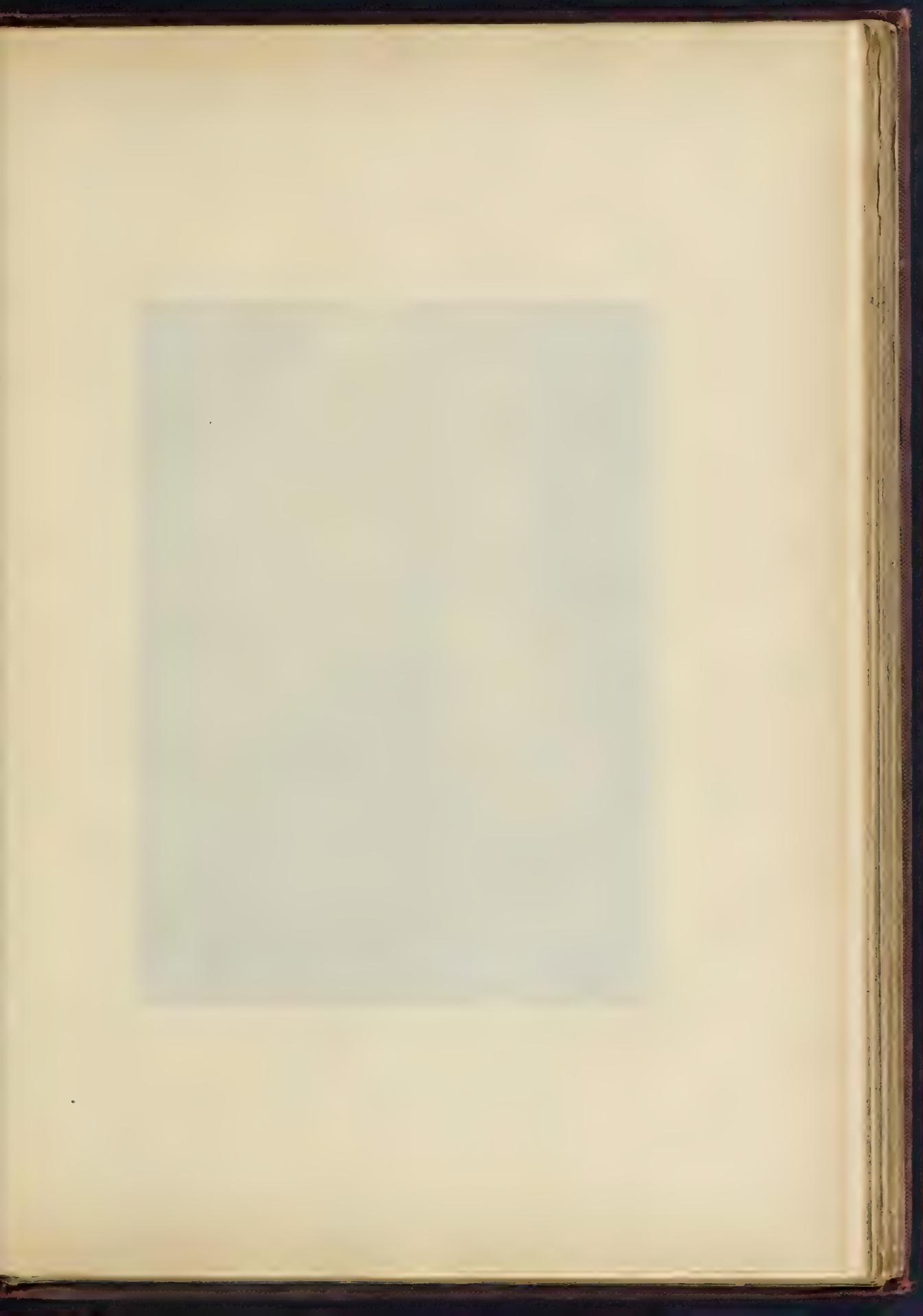
I cannot help regretting that you persist in demanding twenty-five sets of India proofs before letters of the continuation of the "Coast," besides being paid for the drawings. It is like a film before your eyes, to prevent your obtaining upwards of two thousand pounds in a commission for drawings for that work.

Upon mature reflection you must see I have done all in my power to satisfy you of the total impossibility of acquiescing in such a demand; it would be unjust both to my subscribers and to myself.

The "Coast" being my own original plan, which cost me some anxiety before I could bring it to maturity, and an immense expense before I applied to you, when I gave a commission for drawings to upwards of £400, *at my own entire risk*, in which the shareholders were not willing to take any part, I did all I could to persuade you to have one share, which I did from a firm conviction that it would afford some remuneration for your exertions on the drawings, in addition to the amount of the contract. The share was, as it were, forced upon you by myself, with the best feelings in the world; and was, as you well know, repeatedly refused, under the idea that there was a possibility of losing money by it. You cannot deny the result; a constant dividend of profit has been made to you at various times, and will be so for some time to come.

On Saturday last, to my utter astonishment, you declared in my print-rooms, before three persons who distinctly heard it, as follows: "I will have my terms, or I will oppose the work by doing another 'Coast.'" These were the words you used, and everyone must allow them to be a threat. And this morning (Monday) you show me a note of my own handwriting, with these words (or words to this immediate effect): "The drawings for the future 'Coast' shall be paid twelve guineas and a half each."

Now, in the name of common honesty, how can you apply the above note to any



YARMOUTH: VESSEL IN DISTRESS.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(342 48)

THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM.



DEALINGS WITH COOKE

drawings for the first division of the work called "The Southern Coast," and tell me that I owe you two guineas on each of those drawings? Did you not agree to make the whole of the South Coast drawings at £7 10s. each? And did I not continue to pay you that sum for the first four numbers? When a meeting of the partners took place, to take into consideration the great exertions that myself and my brother had made on the plates, to testify their entire satisfaction, and considering the difficulties I had placed myself in by such an agreement as I had made (dictated by my enthusiasm for the welfare of a work which had been planned and executed with so much zeal) and of my being paid the small sum only of twenty-five guineas for each plate, including the loan of the drawings, for which I received no return or consideration whatever on the part of the shareholders, they unanimously (excepting on your part) and very liberally increased the price of each plate to £40; and I agreed, on my part, to pay you ten guineas on each drawing after the fourth number. And have I not kept this agreement? Yes: you have received from me, and from Messrs. Arch on my account, the whole sum so agreed upon, and for which you have given me and them receipts. The work has now been finished upwards of six months, when you show me a note of my own handwriting, and which was written to you in reply to a part of your letter, where you say, "Do you imagine I shall go to John o' Groat's House for the same sum I receive for the Southern part?" Is this fair conduct between man and man—to apply the note (so explicit in itself) to the former work, and to endeavour to make me believe I still owe you two guineas and a half on each drawing? Why, let me ask you, should I promise you such a sum? What possible motive could I have in heaping gold into your pockets, when you have always taken such especial care of your interests, even in the case of "Neptune's Trident," which I can declare you *presented* to me; and, in the spirit of this understanding, I presented it again to Mrs. Cooke. You may recollect afterwards charging me two guineas for the loan of it, and requesting me at the same time to return it to you, which has been done.

The ungracious remarks I experienced this morning at your house, where I pointed out to you the meaning of my former note—that it referred to the future part of the work, and not to the "Southern Coast"—were such as to convince me that you maintain a mistaken and most unaccountable idea of profit and advantage in the new work of the "Coast," and that no estimate or calculation will convince you to the contrary.

Ask yourself if Hakewill's "Italy," "Scottish Scenery," or "Yorkshire" works have either of them succeeded in the return of the capital laid out on them.

These works have had in them as much of your individual talent as the "Southern Coast," being modelled on the principle of it; and although they have answered your purpose, by the commissions for drawings, yet there is considerable doubt remaining whether the shareholders and proprietors will ever be reinstated in the money laid out on them. So much for the profit of works. I assure you I must turn over an entirely new leaf to make them ever return their expenses.

To conclude, I regret exceedingly the time I have bestowed in endeavouring to

TURNER

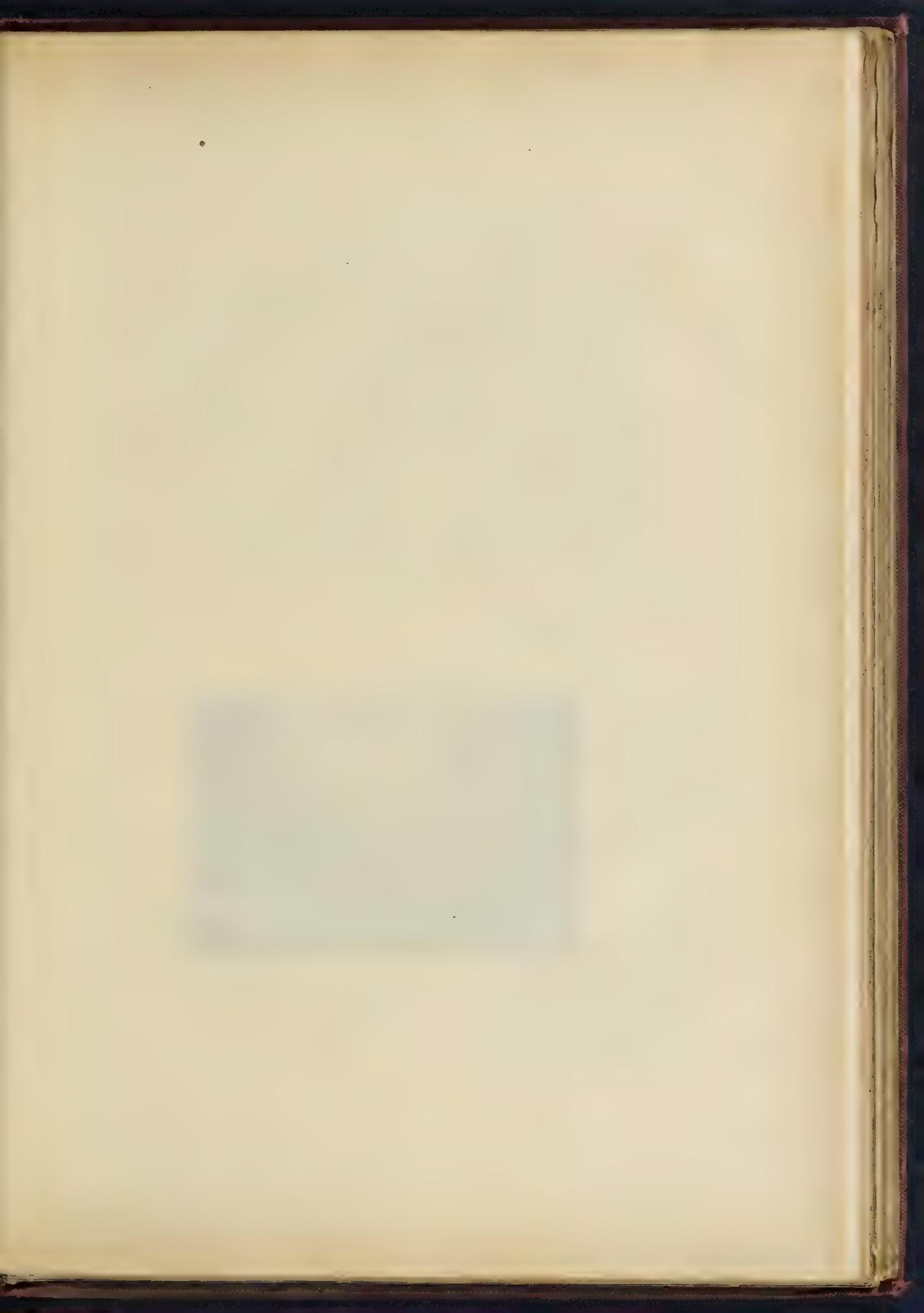
convince you in a calm and patient manner of a number of calculations made for *your* satisfaction ; and I have met in return such hostile treatment that I am positively disgusted at the mere thought of the trouble I have given myself on such a useless occasion.

I remain,

Your obedient servant,

W. B. COOKE.

This letter is one of the most important pieces of evidence we have as to Turner's character. It is, no doubt, an *ex parte* statement, and one which must be accepted or not according to our ideas of its credibility, and of the manner in which it is put together. To me it appears transparently honest. Its clumsy periods suggest no sort of doubt as to its writer's wish to be fair, or as to the painter's actual conduct. On the other hand, when carefully considered, it confirms the impression of puzzle-headedness, rather than of conscious dishonesty, we receive from other acts of Turner. To stand by a bargain and comprehend that the lion's share of the profit goes to the taker of the risk, argues a developed commercial intelligence, which Turner, with all his money-making, certainly did not possess. "He that sweareth to his neighbour and disappointeth him not—though it were to his own hindrance—shall never fall," was not his guiding principle. He shared the narrowness of his class in such matters, and when he found a bargain turning against himself, he thought that a sufficient proof of its want of equity, and justification enough for its forcible revision. The "Southern Coast" had been a great success. Turner had not only been paid for his work ; he had shared in the dividends, and, in his broody way, had no doubt said to himself, "These dividends are going to other people besides me, and they are all coming out of my drawings. I am being paid too little." At one time or another he quarrelled with nearly all the engravers who were in immediate relations with him, with Charles Turner, Lewis, the



GRASSMARKET, EDINBURGH.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

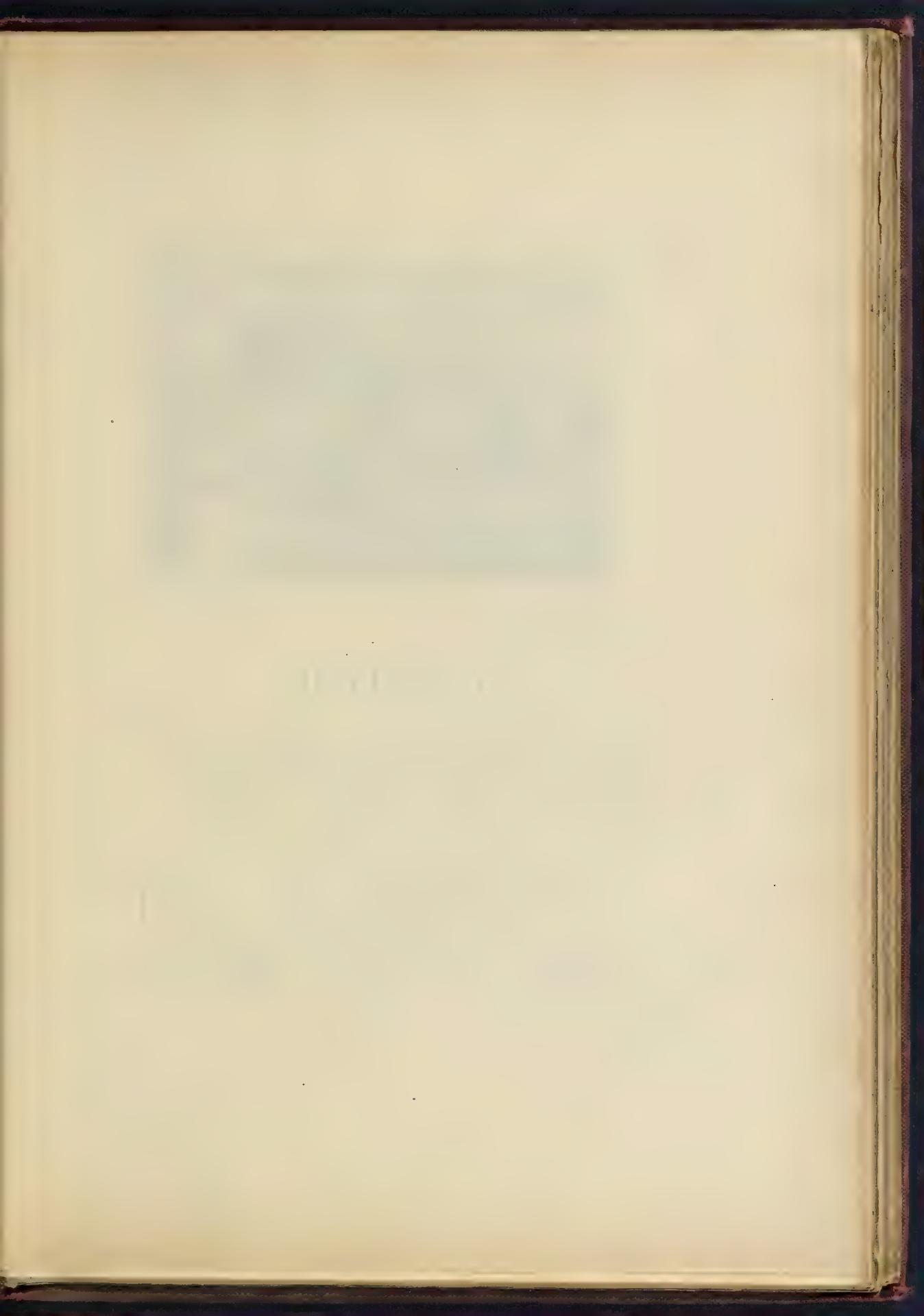
.65 91)

In the Collection of
THOMAS BROCKLEBANK, Esq.

HIS BUSINESS CHARACTER

Cookes, John Pye, &c., which makes it impossible to suppose the fault lay elsewhere than with himself. And yet, in spite of all this, it would, I think, be stupid to infer that the painter was deliberately and consciously dishonest. His mental limitations must be taken into account on both sides of the ledger. His inability to organize thought or to grasp the structure of language, gives us the right, or rather makes it our duty, to assume a similar incapacity in the judgment of affairs. The want of logical development, of true affiliation, which marked his attempts to express himself in words, affected his vision in other ways, and made it impossible for him to grasp all the bearings of a transaction in their true relations. We have a right to believe that, if he could have seen his more equivocal proceedings in business matters with a clear eye, he would have shrunk from them as decisively as he did from meannesses of other kinds.





COLCHESTER.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(111—119)

In the Collection of
W. LOCKETT AGNEW, Esq.



CHAPTER VI.

Turner's central, experimental period—"Sun rising in a Mist"—"Venus and Adonis"—"Crossing the Brook"—"Hannibal crossing the Alps"—"Field of Waterloo"—"A Frosty Morning"—"Hulks on the Tamar"—"Dordrecht"—"Apollo killing Python"—"Dido building Carthage"—"Bay of Baiae"—Culmination of his Second Manner in the "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus"—Momentary return to it in 1835 with the three "Burnings of the Houses of Parliament," and again in the "Fighting Téméraire" of 1838—Early Symptoms of his last Manner.

THE careers of nearly all great artists are readily divisible into periods, but, of course, the boundaries are never sharply marked.

One manner dovetails into another, and the new ideal has generally to struggle for a time with the notion it supersedes before making good its footing. No painter developed more continuously than

TURNER

Rembrandt, whose progress forms, in a way, the chief exception to the period rule. From his first known efforts of laborious construction down to those easy and open pages we now prize so highly as the final deductions from his fifty years of experience, his general progress was so unbroken that his pictures can be dated, almost, to months instead of years. And yet even Rembrandt would hark back now and then, and among his "forties" we can discover a picture here and there which at first sight suggests a "thirty." Also *vice versa*. The tight handling of his youth is varied occasionally by a prophetic incursion into breadth, so that a student of his manner can by no means put aside distrust. It is the same with Turner. The Englishman's periods are unusually distinct, if we compare them by their middles. The ruling, or at least pervading, principle of each is different in kind from the other two. But they are not sharp at the edges. If you put your hands together, with the fingers intermingled in the centre, they will give you a map of the boundary dividing one of Turner's periods from another. The palm of your left hand represents his middle time; the dove-tailed fingers stand for the years between 1830 and 1839; the palm of the right hand for those between 1839 and his death. And this is no less true of the transition between his first period and his second. To find the earliest experiment with the style which dominated his work between 1820 and about 1835 we must go back to 1807, when he painted the "Sun rising in a Mist," or at least to 1812, when he exhibited the "Hannibal crossing the Alps."* In both of these light and its impediments are studied, in the second in combination with a dramatic human incident. On the other hand, the "Venus and Adonis," of about 1806-1808, the "Crossing the Brook," of 1815, the "Orange Merchantman," of 1819, belong essentially to the com-

* It is significant of the change which has come over people's ideas about art, that when it was exhibited, the great accusation brought against this "Hannibal" was that no one could understand it. Now-a-days it would be accused of being too comprehensible!

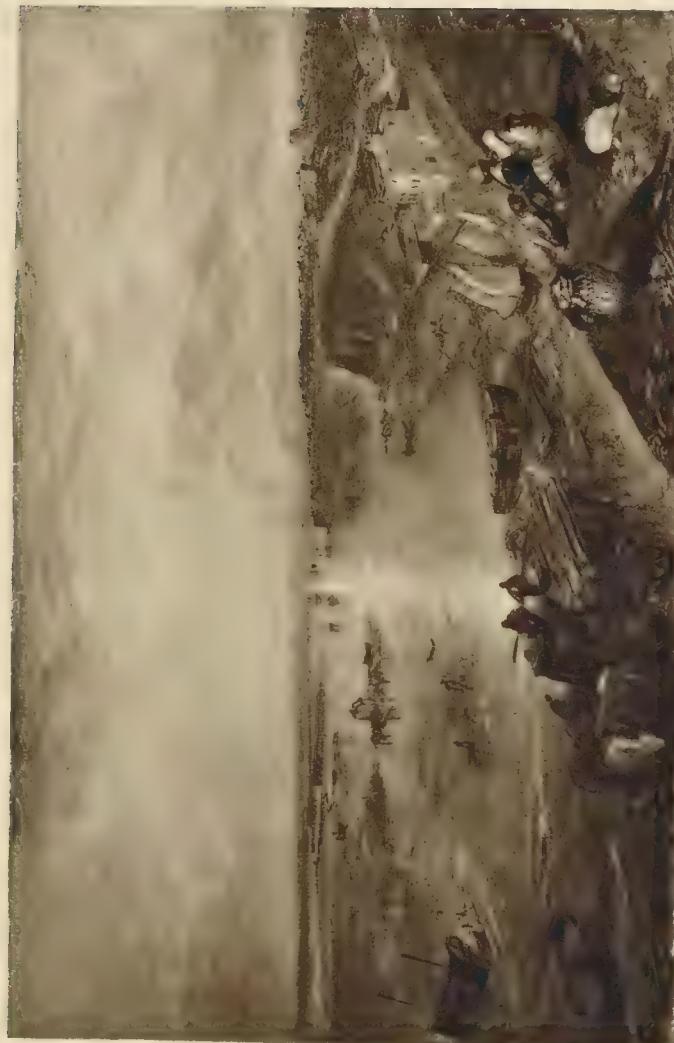


SHOREHAM.

From the Water-Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(8½ x 12½)

In the Collection of
IRVINE SMITH, Esq.



HIS PERIODS

petitive phase of his art, and give but very slight hints of those pre-occupations on which the individuality of his later style depends.

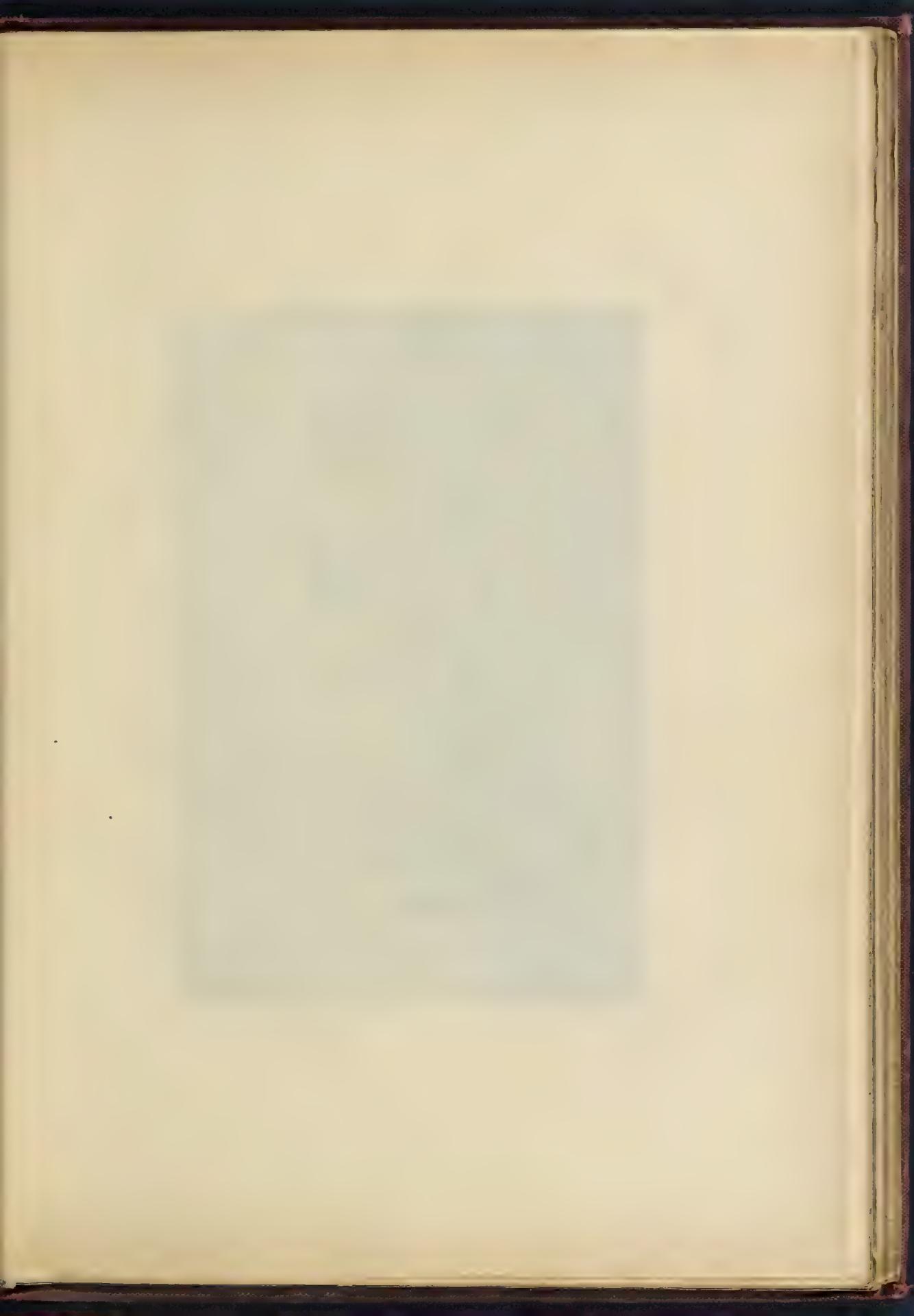
Perhaps if we attempted a really scientific division, we should have to abandon the usual arrangement and recognize that, classed by essentials, Turner as an oil painter had only three periods: that of his youth, when he was learning; that of his manhood, when he was experimenting; and that of his late maturity, when he was letting loose his soul. From the first year of the nineteenth century down at least to 1829, when he painted the "Ulysses," he was more various, more objective in a sense, more easily affected by what he saw and heard, than any great painter had ever been before. No more striking instance of the way in which he varied can be given than the fact that in a single year—1811—he produced three such dissimilar things as "Mercury and Herse," "Apollo Killing Python," and "Somerhill." To trace the final causes of his pictures we have to look, not to the spontaneous fertility of his own brain, but to all sorts of suggestions coming at him from without; to hints contained in other peoples' pictures, in historical events and incidents which passed before his own eyes, in his few favourite books. It was not until he had exhausted his experiments that he settled down to feed upon himself, to bring unity out of sincerity, and to create an art which recalls neither the work nor the play of any other man whatsoever.

But if no very deep distinction can be established between what are commonly called the first and the second periods of Turner, a working division based on his advance in courage, in technical skill, and, of course, in familiarity with nature, may take its place. His extreme dependence for an objective on the work of other men gradually gave way; such things as the "Venus and Adonis," the "Crossing the Brook," the "Garden of the Hesperides," and the "Orange Merchantman" were superseded by, or rather were more widely interspersed among, pictures whose inspiration, though external,

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was not filtered through other personalities. Year after year the pictures inspired by some grandiose scene, or by some picturesque vision of the painter himself, increase in number, until the characteristic Turner is no longer a personal triumph over another man, but a vigorous and unprecedentedly copious illustration of a mood of nature.

But before going on to the more characteristic productions of his middle period, it may be convenient to say what has to be said of those two pictures in which Turner treads with a success unrivalled elsewhere, in the footsteps of Claude and Titian. "Crossing the Brook" was inspired by such Clades as the small "Annunciation" now in the National Gallery, the picture Sir George Beaumont used to take about with him wherever he went, and the once famous "Altieri Clades" which used to be at Leigh Court. The scene is in the lovely valley of the Tamar, not far from Plymouth, but the details recall Italy rather than Devonshire. The beautiful tree on our left is Turner's usual hybrid between a stone pine and a Scotch fir; the flat-roofed mill in the valley is Italian, so are the squared stones, *débris* from some classic bridge or temple, in the foreground. It is only in the deep, leafy lanes and the two girls at the crossing, that England peeps out. The colour is the modified monochrome of Claude, and the painter's conscious diligence has been given, in the main, to the long-drawn-out distance which seems to start the eye on a journey round the world. The great beauty of the picture lies, however, in its form, in the pattern made by its leading lines, and in the easy grace with which the arabesque is carried down through the canvas. In its present position in the National Gallery, "Crossing the Brook" scarcely excites all the admiration it deserves. The greyness of its colour and the extreme delicacy of its gradations demand a setting of their own, and suffer from the proximity of things like the "Caligula's Palace and Bridge," the "Orvieto," and the "Childe



ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCHE.

From the Water Colour Drawing by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

{114 - 171}

In the Collection of
W. LOCKETT AGNEW, Esq.



A PENDANT TO TITIAN

Harold's Pilgrimage." It is a pity Turner did not name it in his will, instead of the "Carthage," as his champion against the Lorrainer. It would have looked well beside the silver of the "Bouillon Claude," and would have more than held its own with the replica of Doria's famous "Mill."

Of all Turner's *pasticcios* the picture reproduced in our Frontispiece seems to me the most artistic. Based frankly on Titian's "Death of Peter Martyr"—which Turner, by the way, must have seen in Paris—it depends for its intimate æsthetic constitution on what the painter himself puts into it. His borrowing is confined to such matters as would lose their value if not completely digested. The idea, taken from the Venetian, is that of setting a main group of figures, painted in high tones, and large enough to dominate the whole, against a low-toned background of soaring trees and threatening sky, of echoing the chief light in detached figures higher up the canvas, and of depending for unity of design on a certain easily perceived but quite indescribable harmony between the forms movements, and gestures of everything put upon the canvas. All this was gathered from Titian, but the gathering would have been of no avail had it not been done with a completeness of sympathy amounting to a momentary identity of sense between the two men. For Titian's interest never nods; his design is significant in every inch, significant to such a degree that the waving tree stems in the background seem to take sides in the deed of violence going on before them. No space of the canvas is idle,* every part of it is active in producing the final unity. Unless Turner were to baldly copy, he had to do this all over again, in a way that was his own, but might almost have been Titian's. He did it triumphantly. The pattern of his

* I am speaking of the "Peter Martyr" as if it were still among the glories of the Venetian Dominicans. The reader will remember that it perished when the Chapel of the Rosary, in SS. Giovanni e Paolo, was burnt in 1867. It had already suffered much, for it had travelled to Paris in the wake of Bonaparte, and had there migrated from panel to canvas.

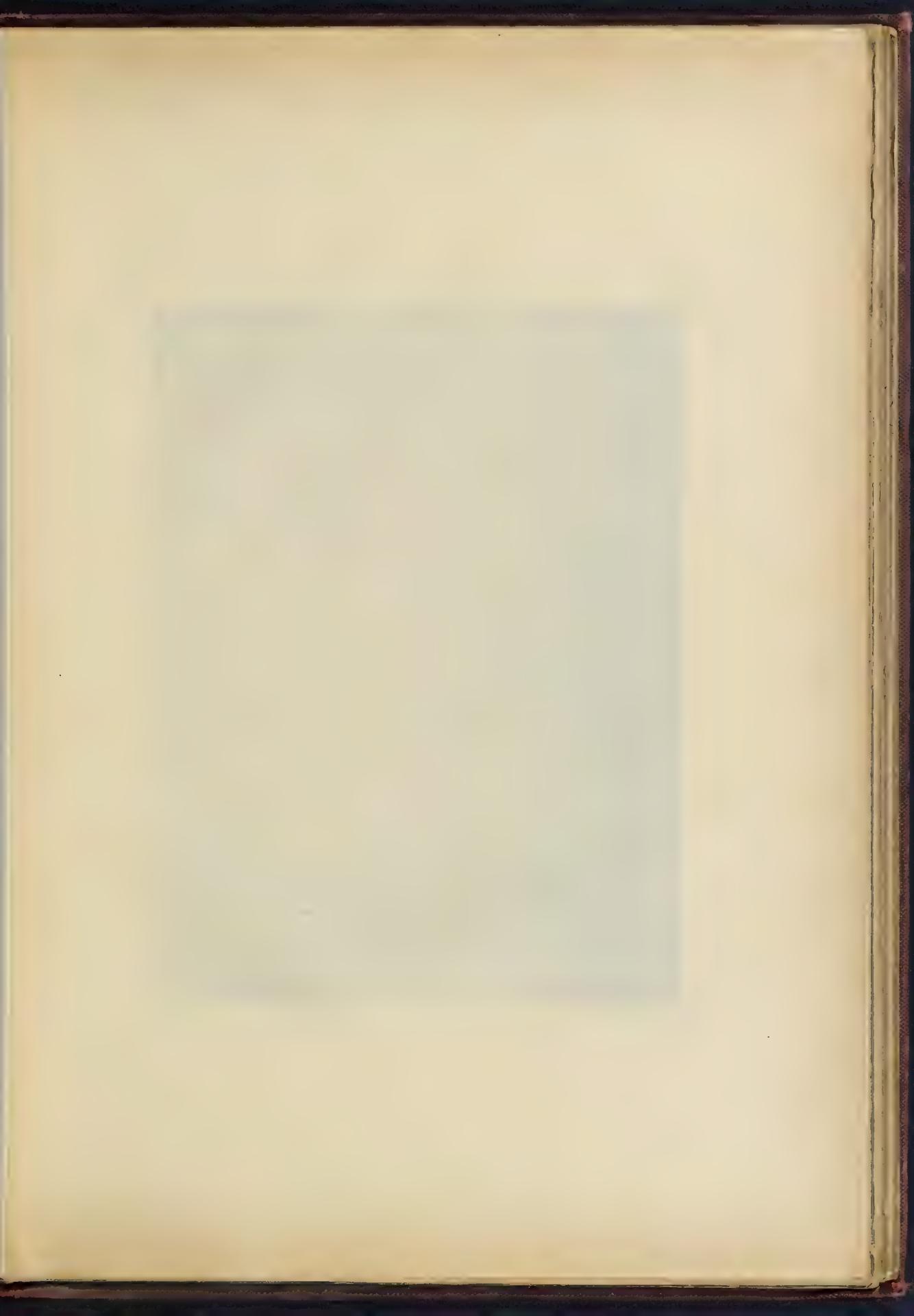
TURNER

background produces the same kind of effect as that of the "Peter Martyr," and yet it is new. And so with all the rest. One general idea governs both pictures ; they might hang as pendants to each other, so far as scope, design and pictorial intention go. But we cannot deny the credit of originality to the Turner, for the new unity implies a new creation.

In colour the "Venus and Adonis" seems to me the masterpiece of Turner's early period. Its low tones have unusual depth and clearness. Unhappily the flesh tints are less satisfactory, while it is heartbreaking to see how little care he has given to the drawing of the two chief figures, or even to their establishment on the canvas in reasonable proportions. Turner's judgment here played him false. Figures of this size, and so placed, are no *étoffage*, they constitute the eye of the picture, and should have received a corresponding amount of thought. In none of his pictures, not even in the "Phryne going to the Bath as Venus," do we miss so greatly the will to put his command of the human figure into action as in this "Adonis." If he had called up but a little of the curiosity informing the life-studies in his pocket-books, he would have created a work of art our pleasure in which would have been without alloy. The "Venus and Adonis" was put down to 1806 in the Novar sale catalogue of 1878. The latest possible date is between 1810 and 1812. I myself incline to the earliest date, partly because, in spite of all its richness, certain habits of brush which belong to the painter's early time are to be traced in it : partly because it seems to be so probable that Turner saw the "Peter Martyr" in Paris in 1802, on his way to Savoy, and that he followed its inspiration before he had time to forget. The "Venus and Adonis" was never exhibited until Turner sent it to the Royal Academy in 1849.*

To the years following the "Venus and Adonis" and "Crossing the Brook" belongs a certain group of pictures which holds a singular position

* It is now the property of Sir Cuthbert Quilter, Bart., M.P.



VAN GOYEN AT ANTWERP.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(36 48)

In the Collection of
H. C. FRICK, Esq.



SOME NATURAL LANDSCAPES

in Turner's work. As representatives of the group we may take "St. Mawes, Falmouth Harbour," "Abingdon, Berkshire," "Windsor," and the "Cottage destroyed by an Avalanche," in the National Gallery; "Hulks on the Tamar," and the "Petworth" of 1810, at Petworth; "Dordrecht," at Farnley; "Whalley Bridge and Abbey," and the "High Street, Oxford," at Lady Wantage's; and "Oxford, from the Abingdon Road," which used to belong to Sir John Fowler. From these pictures, and others of the same class, Turner's contemporaries might have been forgiven had they gathered that he was settling down to a sober, unambitious, but by no means prosaic style of his own. Putting aside the inevitable thought of Cuyp in the "Dordrecht" and an echo of the same influence in the "Hulks on the Tamar," all the pictures of this group are marked by a certain impartiality, an effort, as it were, to hold the balance even between the various constituents of natural beauty. He appears to have suddenly determined to give nature's sobriety a hearing. Setting aside his early studies, he had never worked with such humility before. In these pictures he puts aside artificial tricks of treatment, and trusts entirely to his native taste. As a consequence he has produced a singularly faultless series of works, a series we find it very difficult to criticize, although, from a positive standpoint, they fail to move our feelings as do some of his less judicial statements about the face of nature. Pictures of the class I am now alluding to appeared at intervals between 1810 and 1818. It would not, I think, be unfair to say that they represent the studious side of his mental activity during those years, just as "Venus and Adonis," "Crossing the Brook," "Apollo killing Python," and "Dido building Carthage," represent its inventive side.

The first important indication of a new and personal view was given in the "Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps." This was at the Academy in 1812, an appropriate year, for it was that of the modern Hannibal's invasion of Russia. No doubt, as we see the

TURNER

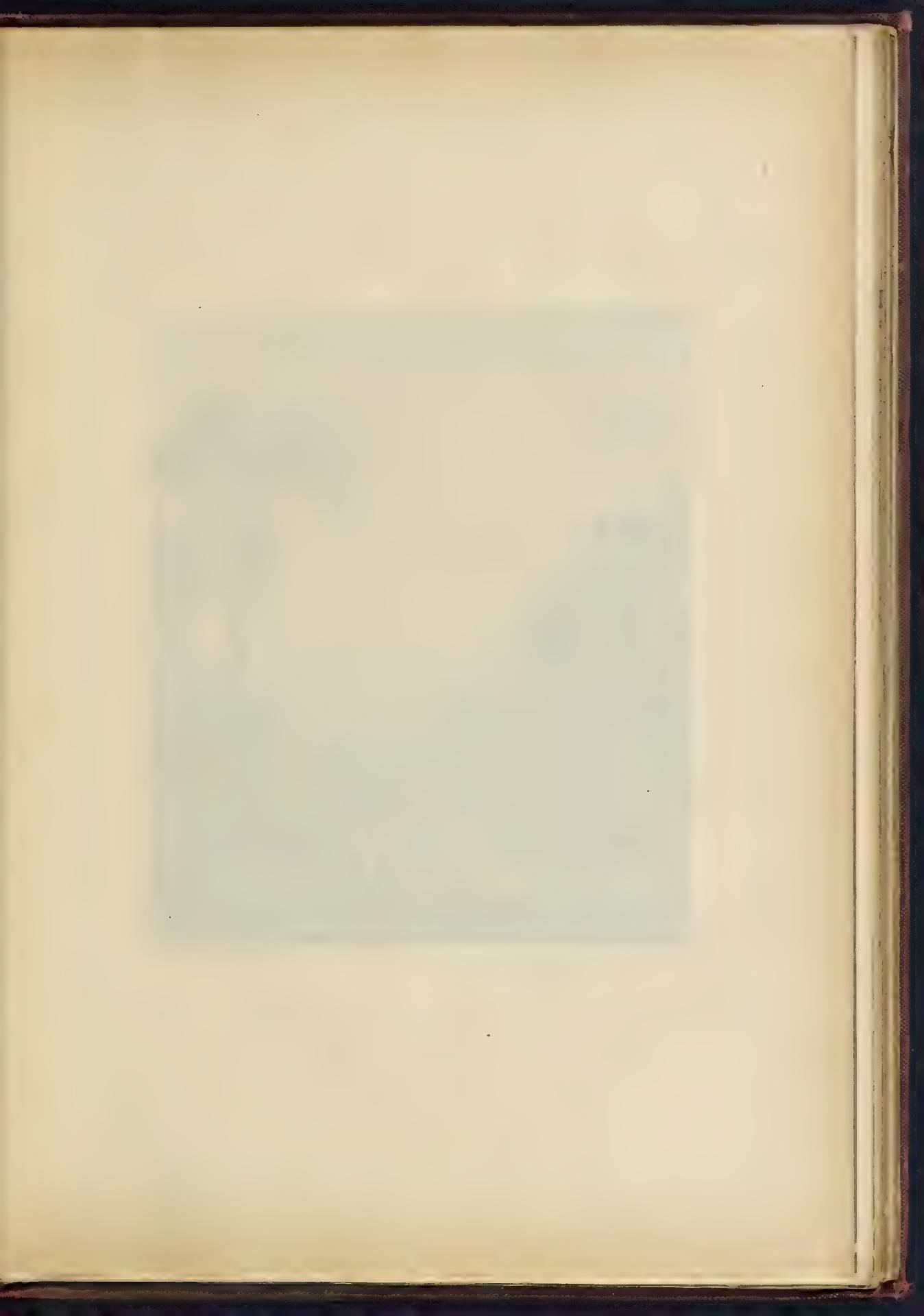
“Hannibal” now, it is sunk from what it was, but even in its first youth it can never have raised such visions of death and disaster on a huge scale as even the lines of Turner himself. Turner was a great painter, and, we are told, no poet, and yet the lines he extracted from the “Fallacies of Hope” to embellish the catalogue suggest a grandeur of catastrophe unreached by his brush:—

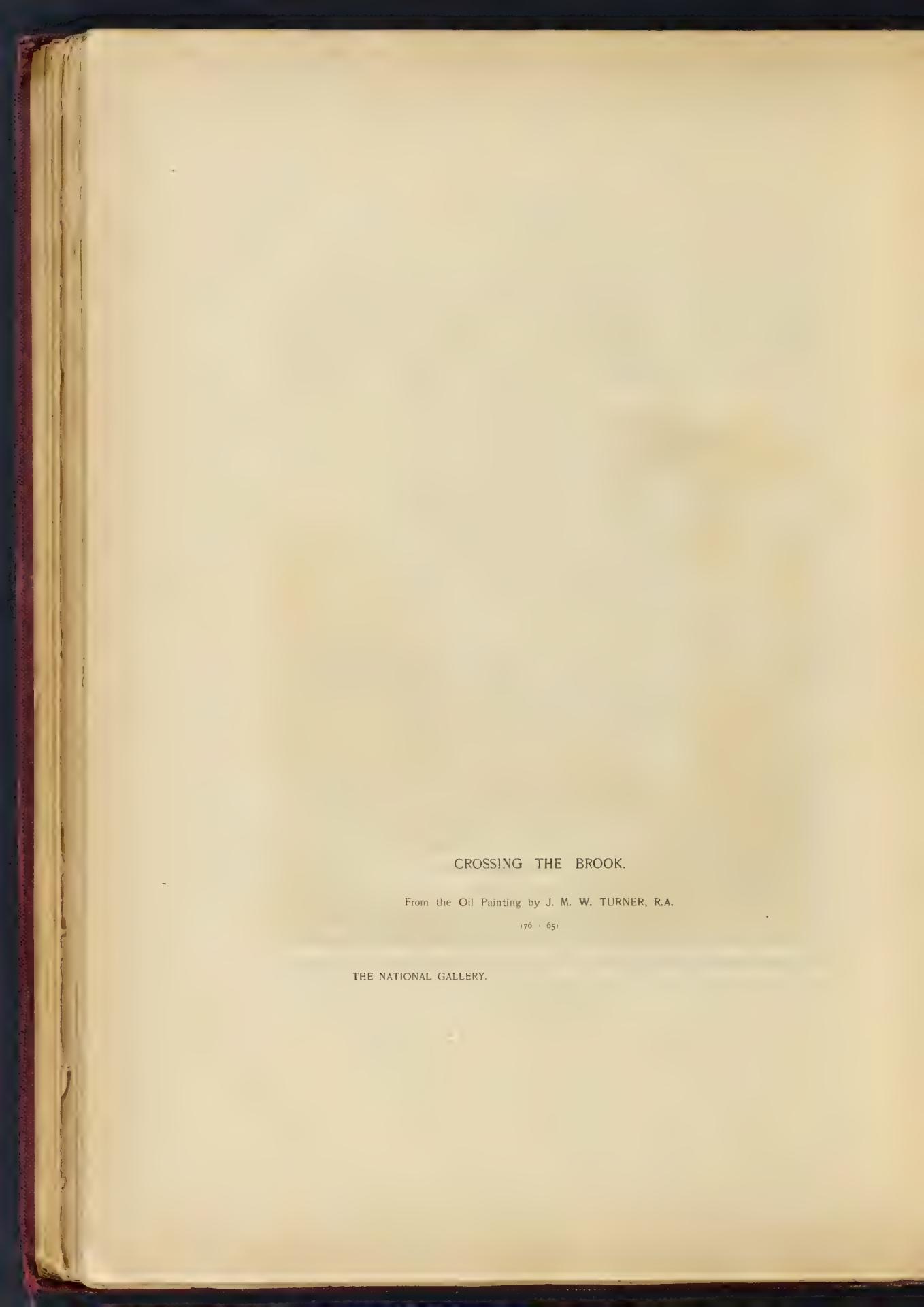
Craft, Treachery, and Fraud—Salassian force—
Hung on the fainting rear! then Plunder seized
The victor and the captive—Saguntum’s spoil
Alike became their prey; still the Chief advanced,
Look’d on the sun with hope—low, broad, and wan;
While the fierce archer of the downward year
Stains Italy’s blanched barrier with storms.
In vain each pass, ensanguined deep with dead,
Or rocky fragments, wide destruction rolled;
Still on Campania’s fertile plains he thought,
But the loud breeze sobb’d, “Capua’s joys beware!”

The change of a letter or two here and there would turn these lines into a more than passable specimen of blank verse as it was understood in Turner’s youth, and the two lines—

While the fierce archer of the downward year
Stains Italy’s blanched barrier with storms,

are enough by themselves to refute those who hold the usual extreme opinions as to Turner’s illiteracy. Simple they are not, but the allusion to Sagittarius is not too far fetched, and they are sonorous and full of colour. The picture itself is grandly conceived, but really paint is incapable of the task Turner set it. A blinding storm among the glaciers of the Alps, with the sun behind it waiting to spring, and the Carthaginian army, elephants and all, toiling like a wounded snake among the gulfs below—how could paint do anything but betray its own limitations when set to realize the visions called up even by such bald words as these? Twenty years later Turner might have done





CROSSING THE BROOK.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



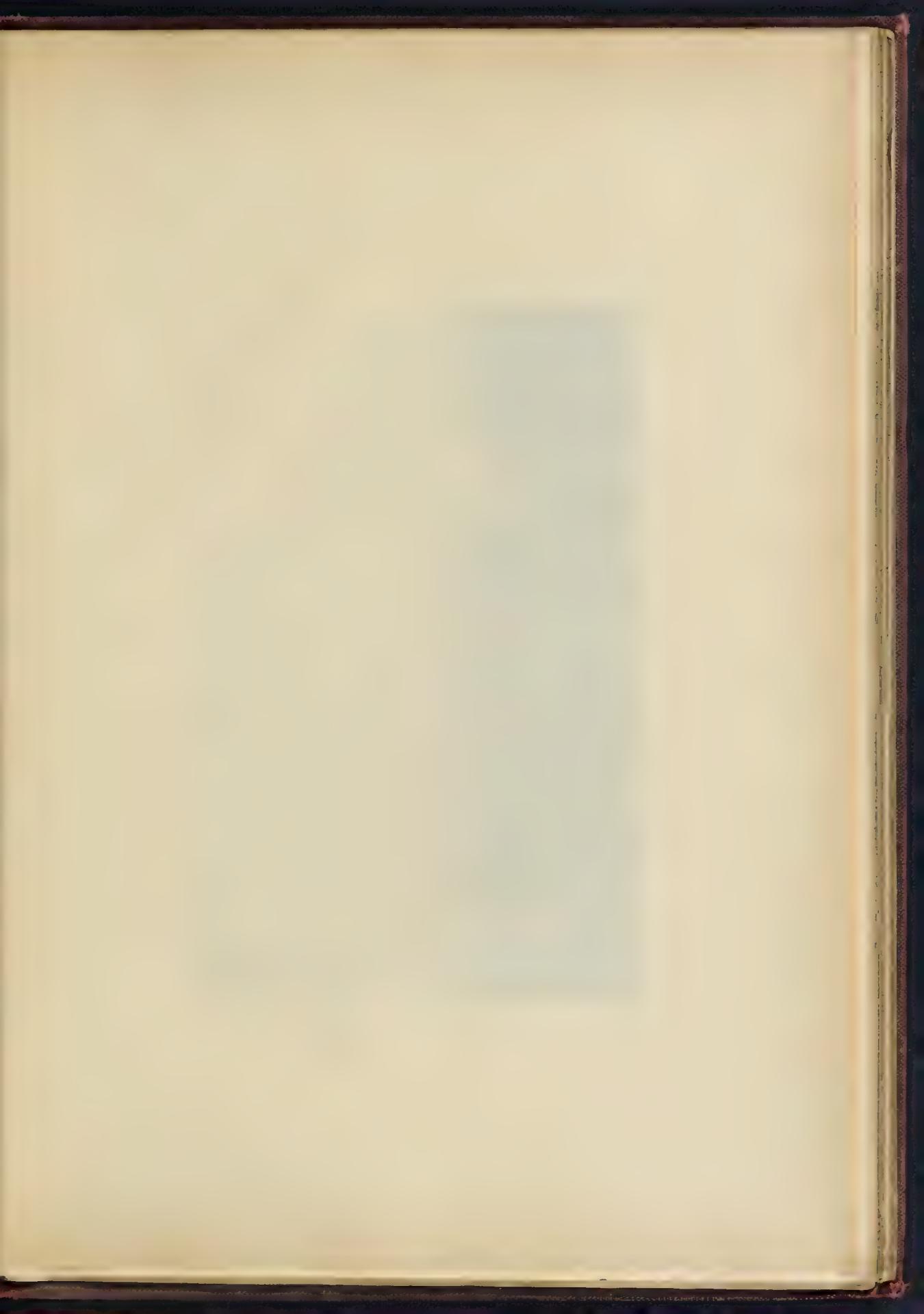
A FROSTY MORNING

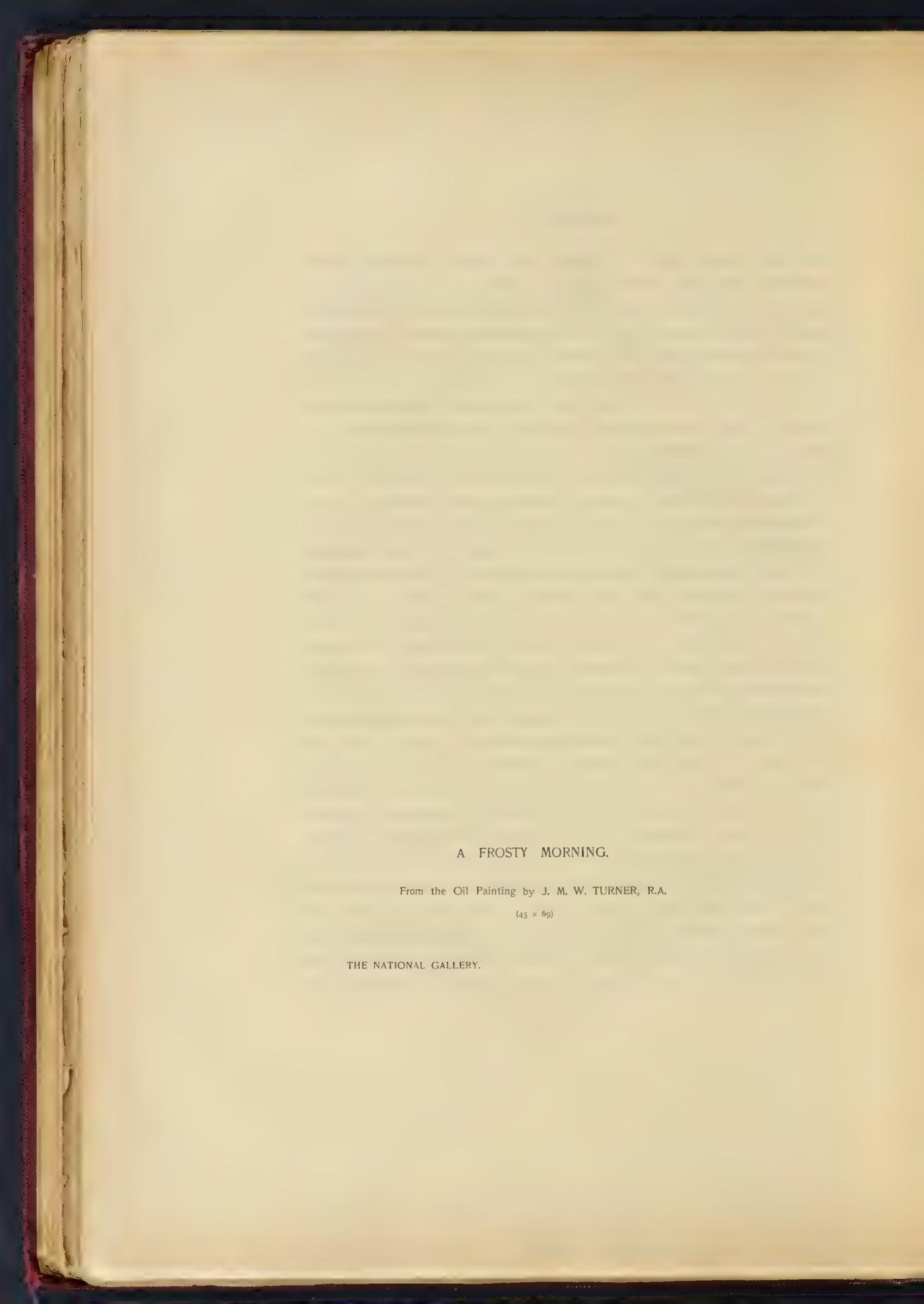
a little more justice to his own conception, for by then he had painted the "Ulysses and Polyphemus," and had grasped the necessity for turning paint into light, if it were to keep pace with poetry. In 1812 his idea was to bring a human incident and a mood of Nature into dramatic unity. The double title of his picture, "Snow-storm: Hannibal crossing the Alps," shows this, and the picture itself, dulled and faded as it is, proves that he thought he had done all that had to be done as soon as suggestion was complete. This method of conceiving a picture, this welding, in a single imaginative act, of human accident to some phase of Nature, could only be used at those rare moments when all the artist's powers were at their best. His imagination had to be at a white heat to make the joint. It was only now and then that the invention which provided the central theme, the vision which saw its appropriate setting, and the hand which realized, were all on fire together. Then Turner touched his apogee, and produced those five or six pictures of his middle period which give him a class to himself, and set him apart from all other landscape painters. In any case the "Hannibal" is a forerunner of the mature Turner. It owes as little as anything he ever did to what other men had done before him. We can scarcely say as much of the "Frosty Morning," for old Crome had been sending very similar things to the Academy for the years immediately preceding 1813, to which it belongs. The charm of "A Frosty Morning" lies in its sincerity. The picture is really a study. There is no apparent composition—nothing more than the selection of a happy moment; the passion indulged is satisfaction with Nature as she is, not the usual Turnerian *mélange* of an adoring curiosity about Nature, with a determination to improve her looks. For the last twenty years this picture has enjoyed a reputation which I cannot help thinking beyond its deserts. The whirligig of time brought its method of conception into vogue, and it came to be credited with a prophetic as well as with an

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artistic meaning. Turner was supposed to have foreseen the phase of development to which it belongs, whereas he was in reality showing that he could assimilate yet one more external style, and paint a Crome as well as Crome himself. In this, I think, he failed, for not only is the "Frosty Morning" inferior to a good Crome in design, it is without the vivacity of handling and the luminous purity of paste the Norwich master would have given it.

Turner's finest period, taken as a whole, was no doubt his last, by which I mean the few years which intervened between 1838, the year of the "Fighting Téméraire," and the patent setting in of decay. His work of this time has an æsthetic quality, a simplicity of purpose, a unity of inspiration, which are new. It has at last thrown reminiscence overboard, and has become the spontaneous expression of the individuality of the man himself. We are done with echoes; the haunting voice which whispered so often, as we pondered over some triumph of his earlier time, "You have seen it before," is silent, and before such pages of romance in colour as the "Sol di Venezia" or "Approach to Venice" we feel no temptation to think of any hand but his. But in spite of all its unity, this final period never rises to the imaginative heights which occasionally mark the years between 1820 and 1840. The impulse which drove him to paint "Hannibal crossing the Alps" must be credited with the boldest and most triumphant flights of his fancy. In 1822-3 he painted the "Bay of Baiae: Apollo and the Sybil"; in 1828-9, "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus"; in 1838-9 the "Fighting Téméraire." The "Ulysses" and the "Téméraire" have no parallel in the rest of his work. They each clothe a sentiment in a robe of colour for which the last powers of the palette have been drawn upon. The moving hint for each came, of course, from outside; I cannot doubt that Titian's "Rape of Europa" inspired the "Ulysses," and we know that fact and Stanfield suggested the "Téméraire." But the hint counts for no more than it ought to in either picture. Their splendour is Turner's own,





A FROSTY MORNING.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(45 x 69)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



BAY OF BAIÆ

and may be taken as the culmination of the dreams by which he was governed during his prime. The "Bay of Baiæ" is not so singular. It is one of a class which includes the "Caligula's Palace and Bridge," the "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," the "Golden Bough," and a few other things besides. It is, however, to my mind, the best of its own particular class, and may be taken as representative of the rest.

It is also the earliest. It was at the Royal Academy in 1823, six years before the "Ulysses" and sixteen before the "Téméraire." One of Turner's ideals is here more completely fulfilled than elsewhere. The general pictorial aim is identical with that of "Crossing the Brook," for the obvious desire in both is to realize the beauty of a wide country under the sun, to suggest plane after plane, to follow the light through vapour, to produce in short on the lingering eye the same effect as the trend of the Italian coast or the long green valley of the Tamar under a noonday sun. Otherwise the two pictures cannot be put in the same class, for "Crossing the Brook" would not have been painted if Claude had never lived, while the "Baiæ" is Turner alone. And being Turner it is more complete, for it embodies no surrender. The whole picture, from the top of the canvas down to the lower edge of all we can fairly include in the middle distance, is a dream of beauty. The falling curves of the land, the colour, the infinity of the half-suggested detail, the diaphanous veil of silvery mist lying low on the sea and creeping up the sidelong valleys, tempt us to sit before the canvas exactly as we should be tempted by the scene in nature, if we could only find it. The foreground is less successful, because used as a support to the rest. Its purpose is to keep the distance in its place, to enhance the delicacy of the colour gradations by contrast with its rather hot browns, and to enforce the artist's intention that his distance should be his picture. The placing of the figures, strongly silhouetted against the most delicate passages in the background, is governed by the same idea. In later

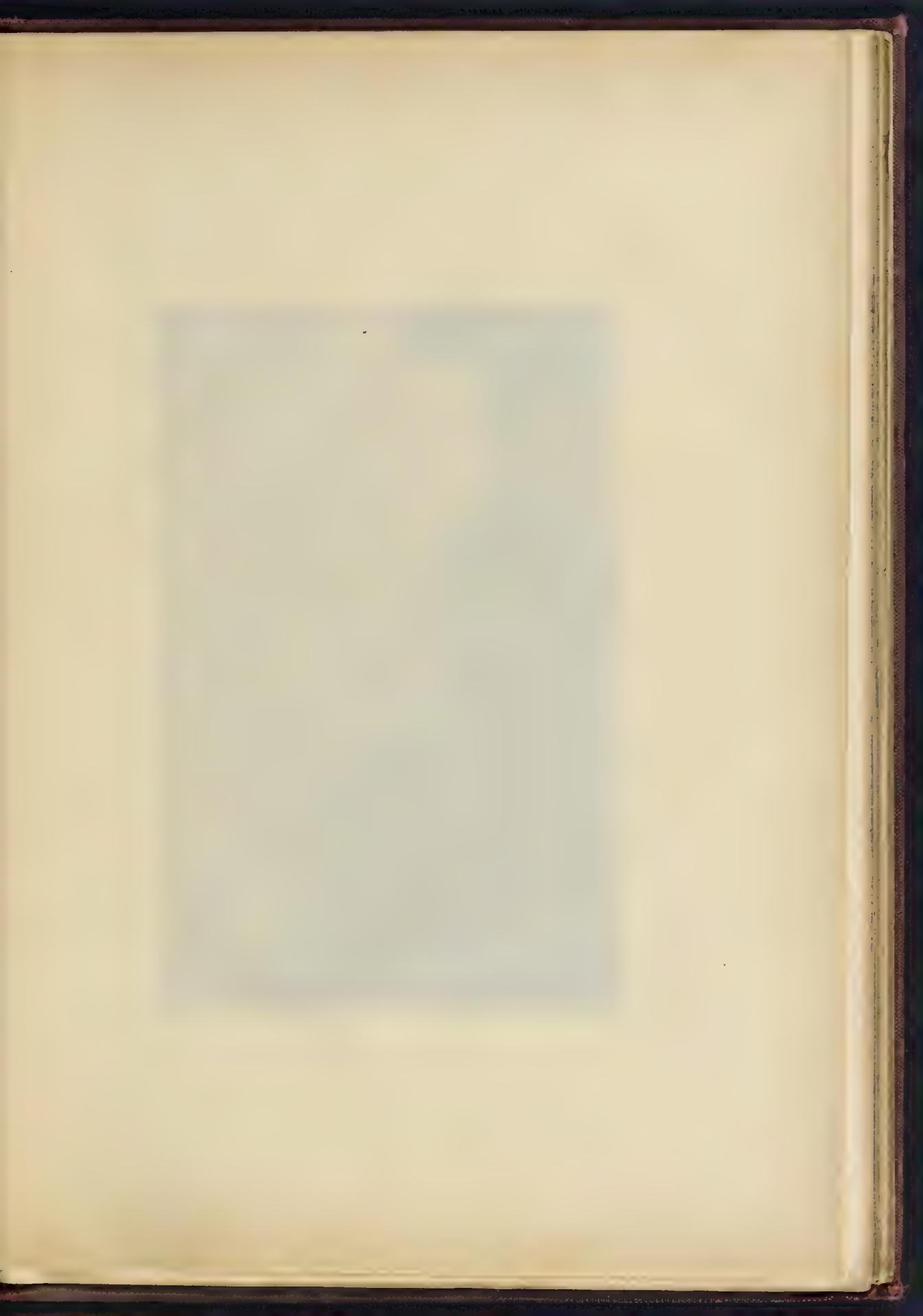
TURNER

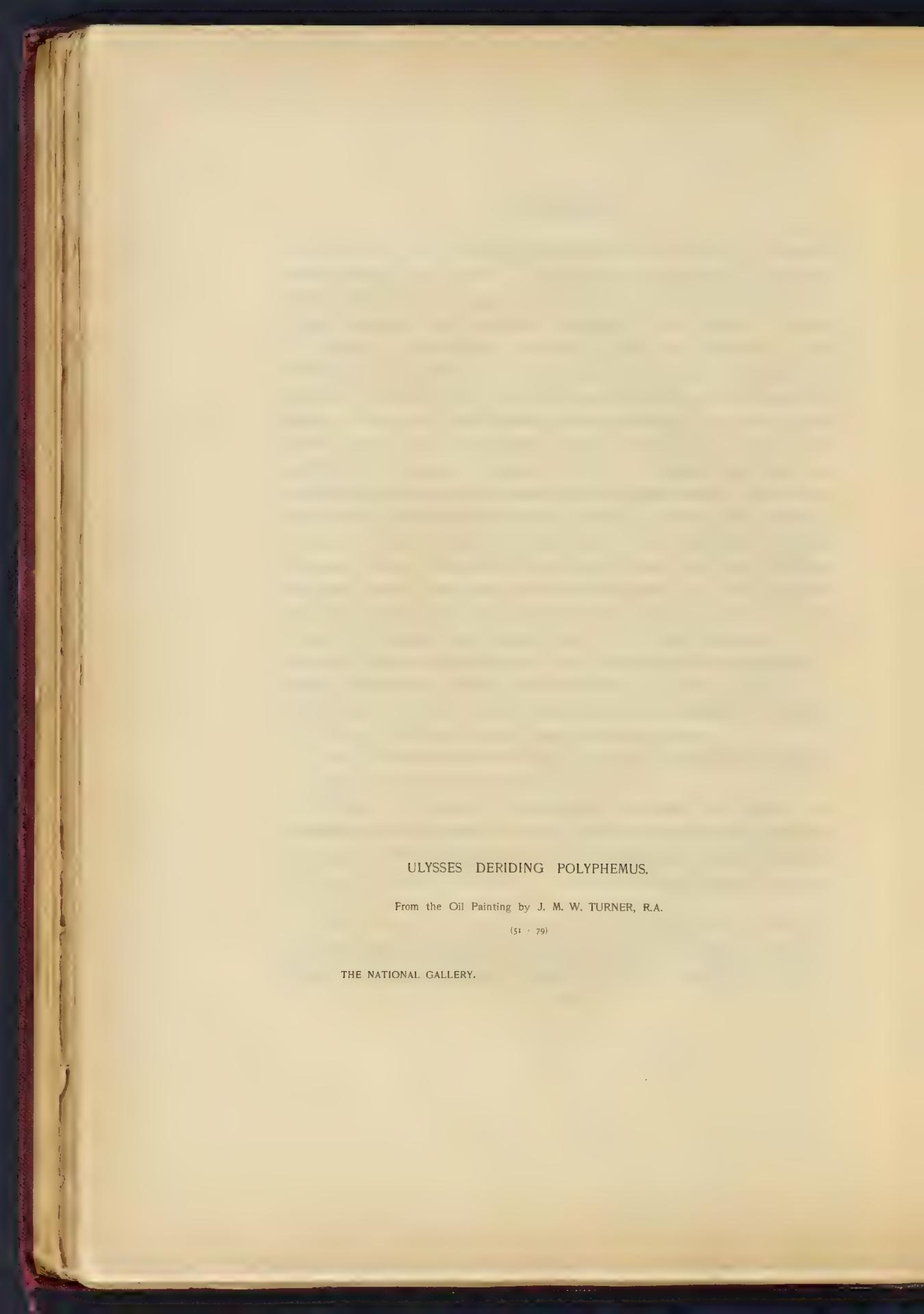
years Turner was to find out that depth can be won in a painted landscape as it is in nature, by having the foreground as simple and full of light as the sky above it. In 1823 he was still affected by the Dutch tradition which required a picture to end below in a band of shadow. I should like, if I could, to justify my preference of this "Bay of Baiae" before any other oil picture by Turner in which his aim was primarily, if not solely, to reproduce the existing beauties of nature. But I can find no words in which to do it. As I have said before, Art is not to be explained in any language but its own. The qualities which give this canvas so keen an appeal can only be perceived, they cannot be translated into a foreign tongue. I can only say that the forms seem to me more gracious, the colour more delicately true, the *enveloppe* more unerringly sustained, than in other things of the same class. Unhappily the picture is slowly perishing. Within my own memory great changes have taken place in it. Much of the lovely, opalescent colour on the distant capes has darkened, and all across the horizon the surface seems to be slowly sinking. The mischief is not so disastrous as in the "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," where the landscape at its junction with the sky is now a ghost. But the progress of decay is fast enough to make us inclined to whisper "goodbye" every time we turn away from the canvas.

Six years later than the "Bay of Baiae,"* the "Ulysses deriding Polyphemus" was at the Royal Academy.†

Taken as a whole, it is probably the masterpiece of Turner. It combines his various ambitions with a greater felicity than we shall ever find again. The dramatic side of the conception is the complement of the pictorial, and *vice versa*. There is no hiatus between the two.

* In the interval Turner painted "Dieppe Harbour" (1825), "Cologne," "Arch of Titus," "Mortlake—Morning" (1826) (See Plate), "Pas de Calais," "Port Ruysdael," "Rembrandt's Daughter," "Mortlake—Evening" (1827) (See Plate), "Morning of the Carthaginian Empire," "Cowes," "The Birdcage," "Orvieto," "Jessica" (1828). † See Plate.





ULYSSES DERIDING POLYPHEMUS.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(51 - 79)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



ULYSSES AND POLYPHEMUS

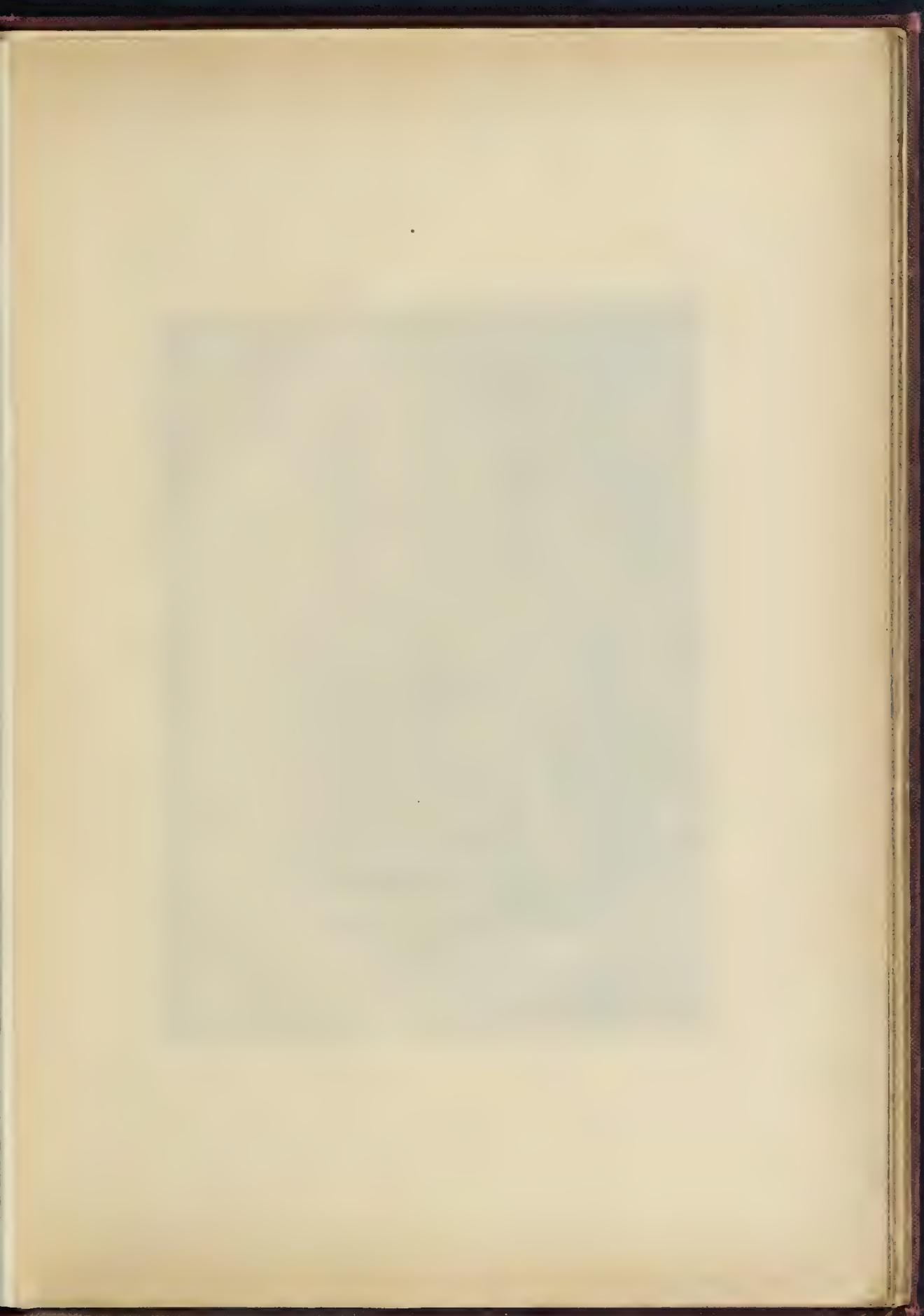
They are focussed at the same point, and their separate powers are each carried out to the end. If Turner had thought only of Homer as he contrived the painted story, and of nothing but colour, light and pattern as he schemed the decorative page, he could scarcely have done more several justice to each ; and yet the end is unity, and the driving home of one definite impression. It may seem fantastic to bracket Turner with Hogarth ; and yet I do not know where, in English art, we are to look for an example of inter-dependence between story-telling and picture-painting that can live beside the "Ulysses," unless we turn to the "Rake's Progress" or the "Marriage à la Mode." There again we shall find stories told in details which also make a pattern, in details which by colour, form, and position in the plane, build up pictorial unity at the same time as they inform us what the puppets on the canvas have been doing and are about to do next. The story, as Turner tells it, of how Ulysses chaffed Polyphemus is simple, stirring, and Homeric ; the design is superb, and the colour touches the limits of achievement. The one defect, the point at which Turner's deficient *virtuosité* peeps out, is the perverse constitution of some parts of the crust. The sky is vapour and light, the sea is water, the sun a blazing conqueror come to work his daily miracle, the ships are living things shaking out their wings to fly, the Cyclops the mysterious shadow, dying in the dawn, that he ought to be. And the centre of all this glory, the mass which should form its eye, is but a slab of yellow ochre ! The mainsail of the hero's ship, the quivering canvas which we look to see hanging like a ghost between the blazing sunrise and the cool lights reflected from the western sky, is dead and decaying paint. Is this hypercriticism ? I do not think so, for the fault is ruinous—and characteristic. It was only rendered possible by that indifference to, or at least insufficient solicitude for, the intrinsic powers, the essential capacities and limits, of his material, which Turner so often betrayed. Come what may, a painter should never lay bare the weakness of paint. He should never allow us to feel that his aim has been missed because

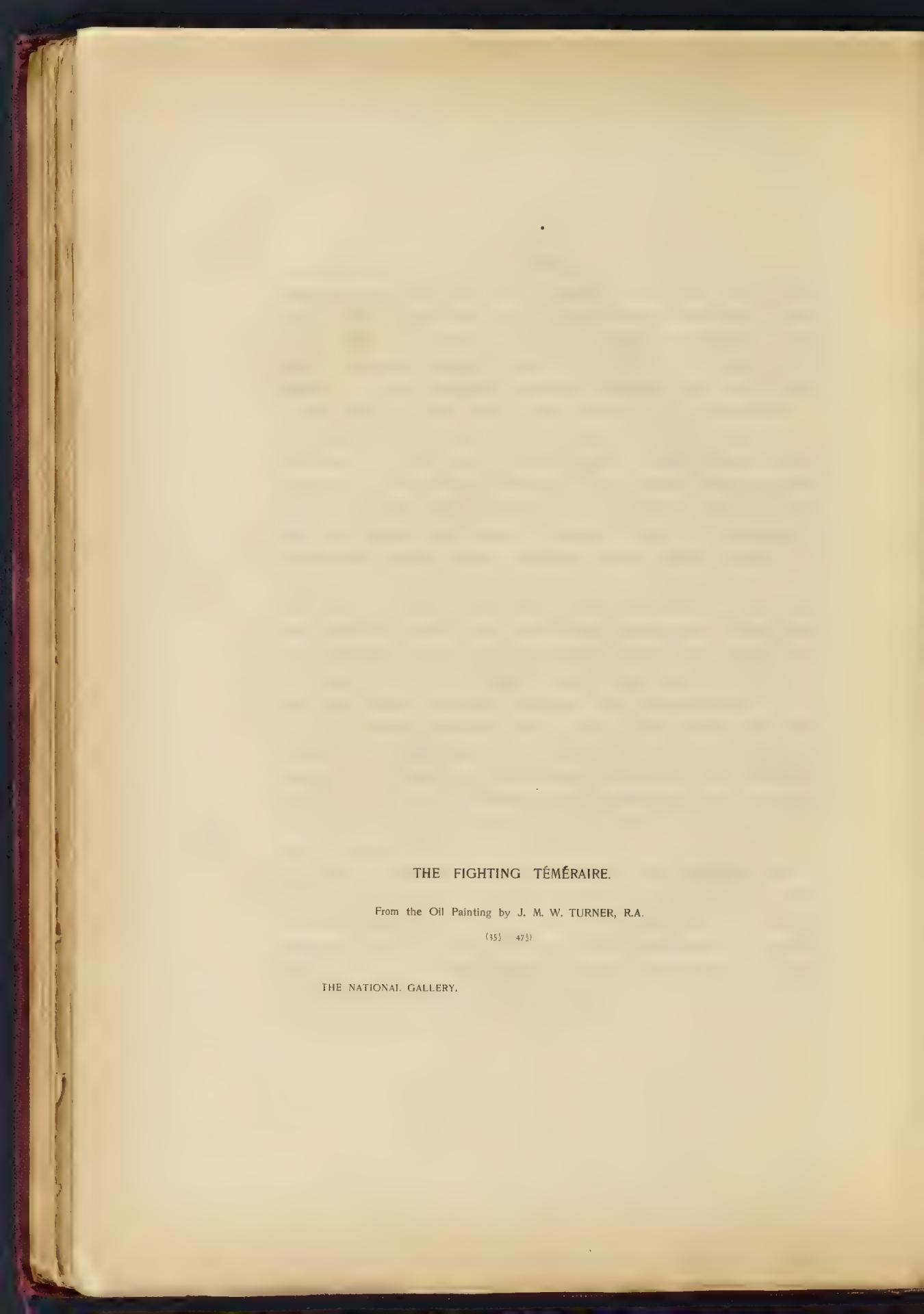
TURNER

it was beyond the range of the substance he was using.. Turner often made this inevitable by trying to render things which art can only suggest, such as luminous vapour, and the uncountable atoms of water which carry the sunshine all about us. Such a proceeding opens the door to disillusion, although it implies ambition and a consuming love for nature. It argues a deficient tenderness for paint itself, and so leads to such disasters as the yellow ochre mainsail in the "Polyphemus."

Ten years after the "Polyphemus," Turner painted the most popular of all his pictures, "The Fighting *Téméraire* tugged to her last berth to be broken up" (See Plate). The *Téméraire* was the second ship in the weather line at Trafalgar. She immediately followed the Flag Ship into action, and it was in hailing her deck, and ordering her commander, Captain Harvey, to keep his proper station, "astern of the Victory," that Nelson's voice was heard for the last time outside his own ship. In the battle itself, the *Téméraire* received the surrender of the *Fougueux*, and lost one hundred and twenty-three of her men. She was sold out of the service in 1838, and taken to Rotherhithe to be broken up. It was during this final journey that Turner saw her. He and Clarkson Stanfield and some other artists had been on an excursion to some down-river haunt, when, on their return, they passed the little throbbing tug with the gaunt bulk of the old battleship behind her. "There's a fine subject," said Stanfield. The *Téméraire* was only sold out of the service in the middle of August, 1838, and the picture was at the Academy eight months later, so Turner lost no time in taking the hint.

The "Téméraire" happily combines three different sorts of appeal. As a work of art it gratifies the artist, as a page of history it excites the lover of his country, as a reproduction of external beauty it delights the eye seeking to renew the pleasures of contemplating nature. Its greater popularity than its predecessor of ten years before arises, no doubt, from its patriotic appeal. It is more amusing



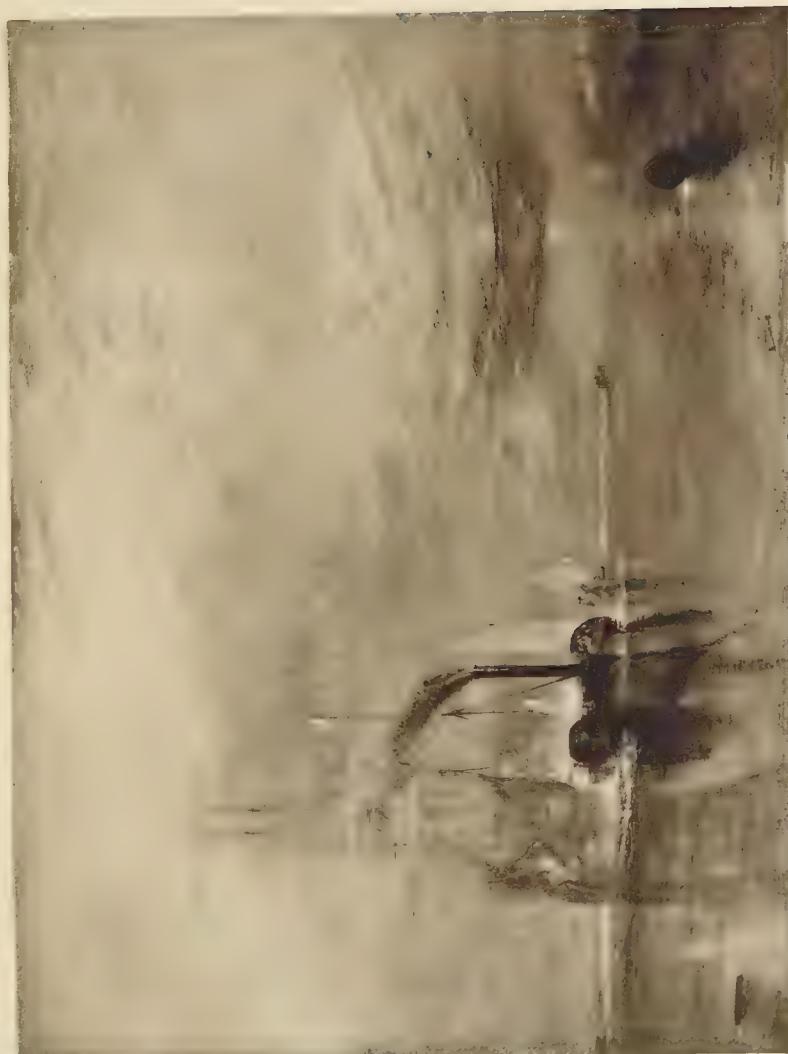


THE FIGHTING TÉMÉRAIRE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(35½ 47½)

THE NATIONAL GALLERY.



THE TÉMÉRAIRE

to an Englishman to be reminded of the naval prowess of his country than to be called on to brush up his memories of the *Odyssey*. Apart from this, the picture, beautiful as it is, represents a less forceful moment in the painter's life than the "Polyphemus." Its success depends more upon the value of the external hint, and less upon the genius with which that hint is carried out. There is nothing to correspond to the wonderful design of the earlier picture; on the other hand, the colour, if less gorgeous, is quite as subtle and melodious. It follows a scheme of which Turner was fond at this time. On the left, the canvas is a blaze of reds and yellows, while the right is cool and blue. This division, in its sharpness, was possibly suggested by his experience with the fire which destroyed the Palace of Westminster in 1834. This fire he painted at least three times,* from the Lambeth end of Westminster Bridge and from a point near to where the Charing Cross Bridge now touches the Surrey bank. All three canvases are cool and blue on their right, red and flaming on their left. These pictures have never been popular, and yet as æsthetic conceptions they may be called *éclaireurs* for the "Téméraire."† While preserving the same idea in the latter picture Turner avoids the loss of interest to which it led in the two fire subjects. The sun is sinking in a blaze of crimson and gold, but over the rest of the canvas there is as much light as would mean a sun not much sunk from noon in an average landscape. The expedient is artificial, but its success is not to be gainsaid. Our reason may protest against making the sun, and the sky in its neighbourhood, lower in tone than the objects which are only rendered visible by its light; but our feelings justify the ruse, and

* One picture is in the possession of Mr. Victor Marshall, of Monk Coniston, at the head of Coniston Lake; another, different in its point of view, belongs to Mr. Arthur Sanderson, of Edinburgh; a third to Mr. Holbrook Gaskell, of Woolton Wood, Liverpool.

† In his water-colours Turner was much given to putting both sun and moon into the picture, and to opposing a broad, warm, sunlit space on the one hand, to a little field of blue, set about the moon, on the other. The habit amounts to a trick, so mechanically does he sometimes use it.

TURNER

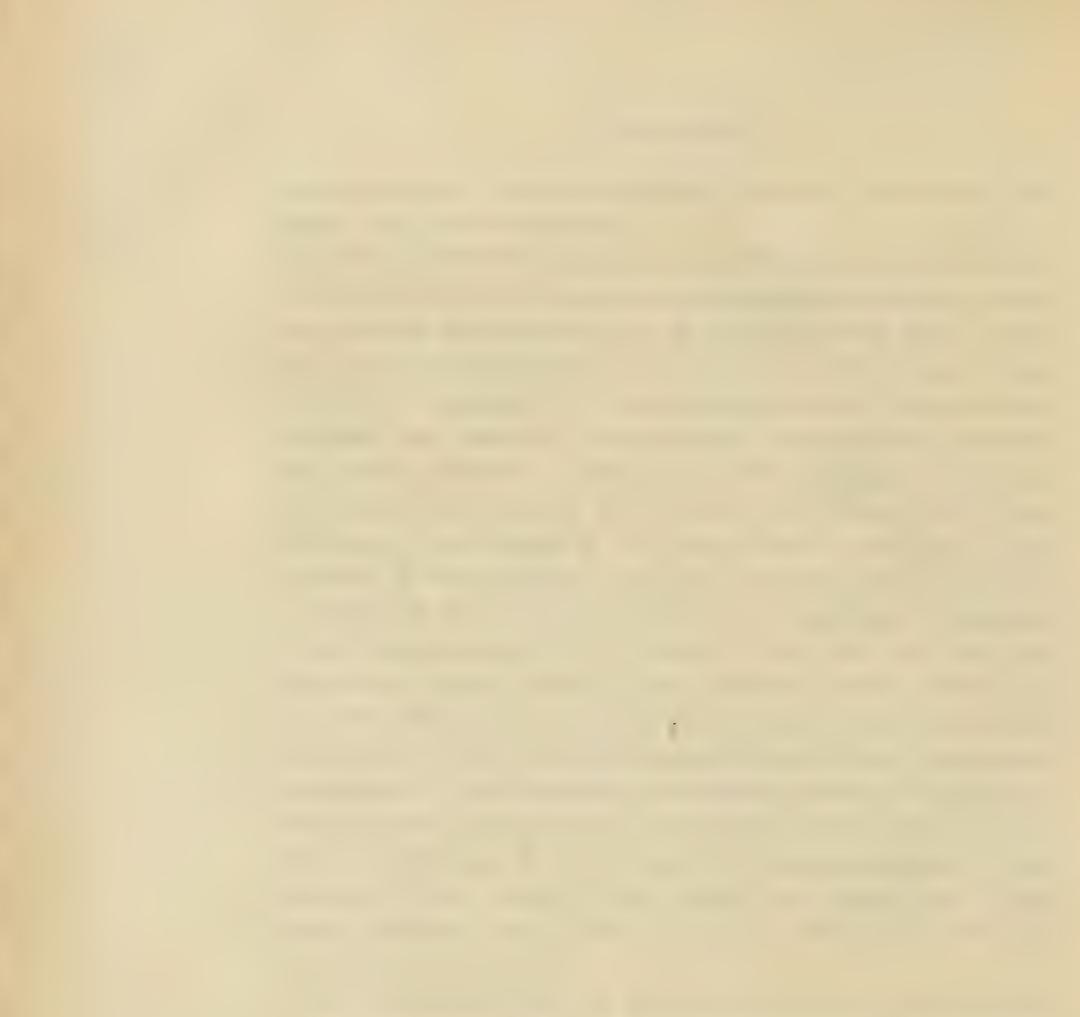
force us to accept the picture in which it occurs as one of the most organic things Turner ever did.*

Between the "Polyphemus" and the "Téméraire," that is, between 1829 and 1838, Turner's manner swung backwards and forwards, producing now a picture that held chiefly by the principles of his middle period, now one that foreshadowed the vague splendour of his later years. Even before the "Polyphemus" he had painted one or two things in which everything was sacrificed to the suggesting of light, to the rendering of a visible atmosphere. The most notable, perhaps, are the two Mortlake pictures, views of the home of Mr. William Moffat, seen from opposite points and at the two extremes of the day. Here, no doubt, he was fulfilling a commission, painting, in fact, portraits of a garden, and that a garden which precluded anything in the nature of picturesque design. He has done his best with the data, and organized as happy a pattern as the conditions, perhaps, would allow. As to that, however, one hesitates to be positive, seeing what a much better design Hobbema wove similar materials into in his "Approach to Middelharnis." That Turner felt the difficulty is shown, I think, by the extreme solicitude he has lavished on the drawing of the trees, and above all on the rendering of the morning and evening atmospheres. Here memories of Cuyp seem to have revived, and driven him to put all his knowledge into the production of something which falls little short of absolute illusion.

In some ways these two pictures tell us more of the difference between Turner and other artists than anything else he did. Their *naïveté* of conception, the simplicity with which he has accepted the shape of the place, and confined his own genius to the task of

* The "Fighting Téméraire" was engraved by J. T. Willmore, and a comparison of his plate with the original picture reveals a curious discrepancy between the two. In the picture the mast of the steam-tug is abaft the funnel, an impossible position. In Willmore's plate the mistake has been rectified, and the two uprights transposed, to the advantage of the composition as well as to the satisfaction of any sailor critic.





MORTLAKE TERRACE: EARLY SUMMER MORNING.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(55 17)

In the Collection of
S. G. HOLLAND, Esq.



THE TWO MORTLAKES

providing an *enveloppe*, is almost pathetic. There is no design, no selection from the standpoint of general form, no preference of one detail before another. A detailed comparison of such docility as this with the fidelity of Girtin, would throw a flood of light on the two men's artistic dispositions, and would, I think, justify the contrast I drew in a former chapter. It is interesting to know that to a critic so perspicacious as Bürger, these Thames-side pictures appeared to deserve a place among the finest things in art. I cannot refrain from quoting what he says:—

“Par exemple—et c'est là le chef-d'œuvre, celui que je prendrais pour me représenter le génie de Turner dans sa franchise tout exceptionnelle, et absolument dégagé de tout influence des anciens maîtres,—‘Barnes Terrace,’* sur la Tamise, tableau de moyenne proportion. Cette terrasse, ou plutôt ce quai sur le bord de la Tamise, est pris d'affilée, comme certaines vues des canaux de Venise par Canaletti : le parapet, de travers en travers de la toile, avec une rangée d'arbres, assez grêles : on ne voit que cela. A droite, en bas du parapet, doit couler la Tamise, et à gauche, le long de la chaussée, on peut supposer des *rows* de maisons, mais il y a trop de soleil, irradié dans une atmosphère brumeuse et poussiéreuse, pour qu'on puisse discerner ce qui est à l'entour. Ce qu'on voit des arbres et des pierres est enveloppé et dévoré par la lumière ; tout semble être la lumière même et jeter aussi des rayons et des étincelles. Claude, le suprême illuminateur, n'a jamais rien fait d'aussi prodigieux.”†

The later of these two pictures, the “Evening,” was painted, or at least exhibited, in 1827, a year which saw at the Academy two more echoes of Dutchmen, almost the last he attempted. These were the “Rembrandt's Daughter,” already alluded to, which hangs at

* These two pictures, both representing the same place, used to be known as “Mortlake, Summer Morning,” and “Barnes Terrace, Summer Evening” (See Plates).

† “Trésors d'Art en Angleterre,” p. 425 (Third Edition, Paris, 1865).

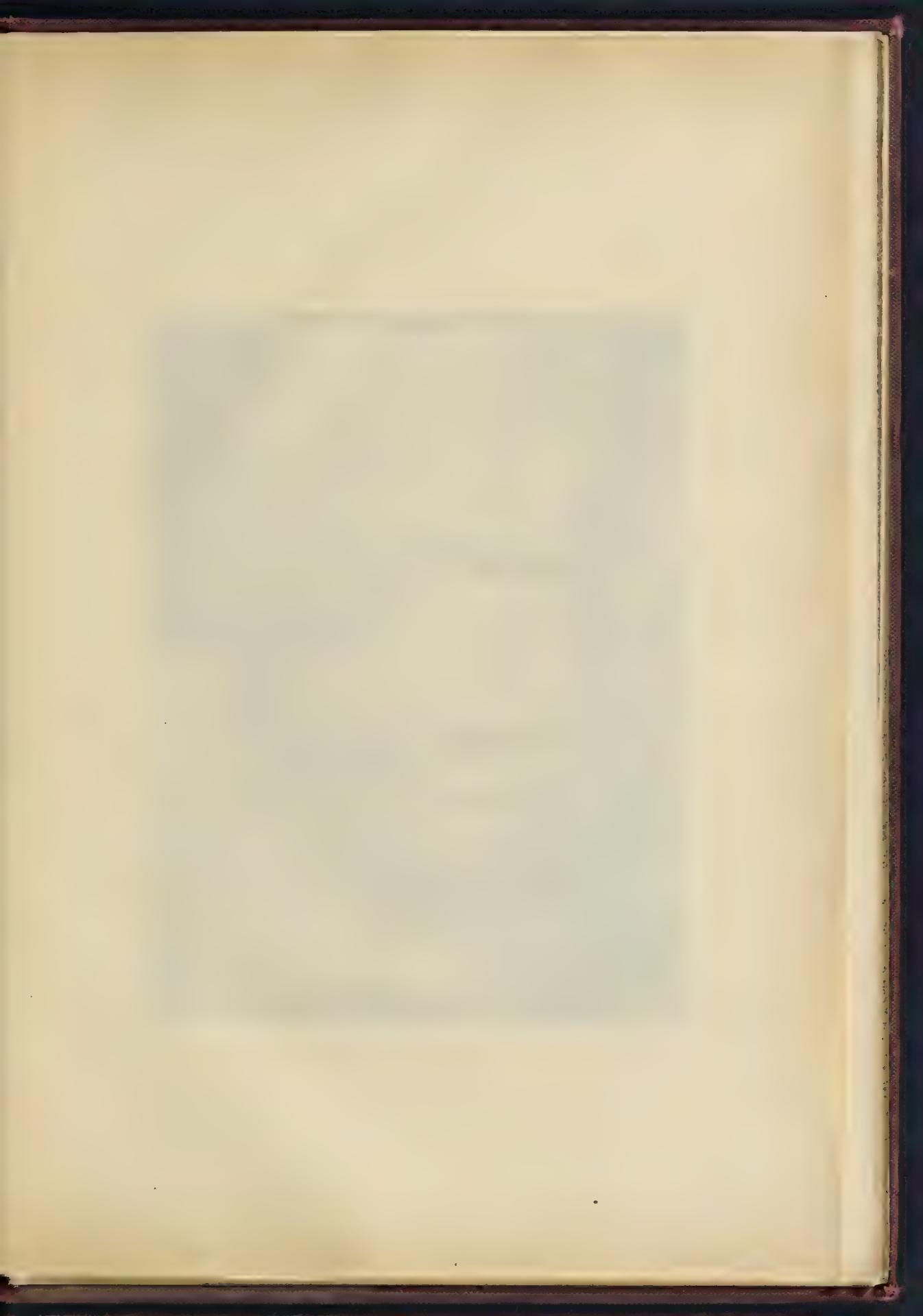
TURNER

Farnley, and the still franker *pasticcio*, "Port Ruisdael,"* which has lately crossed the Atlantic. In 1835 he exhibited two "Burnings of the Houses of Parliament," and in 1839 the "Téméraire," which, as I have already suggested, was a happier application of the same pictorial idea. On the whole, however, the pictures painted after 1830 strongly foreshadow his latest manner. A few, such as the "Mercury and Argus"† of 1836, have an air as though they had been conceived years before they were painted; but as a rule unity of intention, at least, now becomes more and more his characteristic to the end. His seizure upon some one particular effect anticipates the impressionists, and leads in not a few cases to absolute disaster. Probably the first picture in which his new way of seeing things ended in a balanced work of art was the "Orvieto," which is supposed to be the "small three feet by four," finished "to stop their gabbling," in Rome, in the summer of 1828.

The years from 1830 to 1840 are marked, no doubt, by an extraordinary changeableness in Turner's art. We find exhibited at each Academy pictures which seem to have been suggested by divergent notions of what paint should do. The following list of the more notable things belonging to this decade is enough to prove this:—"Yarmouth,"† "Caligula's Palace," "Vision of Medea," "Lord Percy under Attainder," and "Watteau Painting," of 1831; "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," "Landing of the Prince of Orange," "The Fiery Furnace," and the Soane "Van Tromp" of 1832; "Canaletto Painting," "Antwerp: Van Goyen looking for a Subject,"† the Sheffield "Van Tromp" and "Quillebœuf," of 1833; "The Fountain of Indolence," "Golden Bough," "Venice" (John Naylor, Esq.), "Northumberland Wreckers," and "St. Michael's Mount," of 1834; "Ehrenbreitstein," "Hastings" and "Burning of the Houses of Parliament," of 1835; "Piazza di S. Marco,"† "Rome from the Aventine," and "Mercury and Argus,"†

* See an interesting note upon this picture in The Art Journal for 1900, p. 288.

† See Plates.



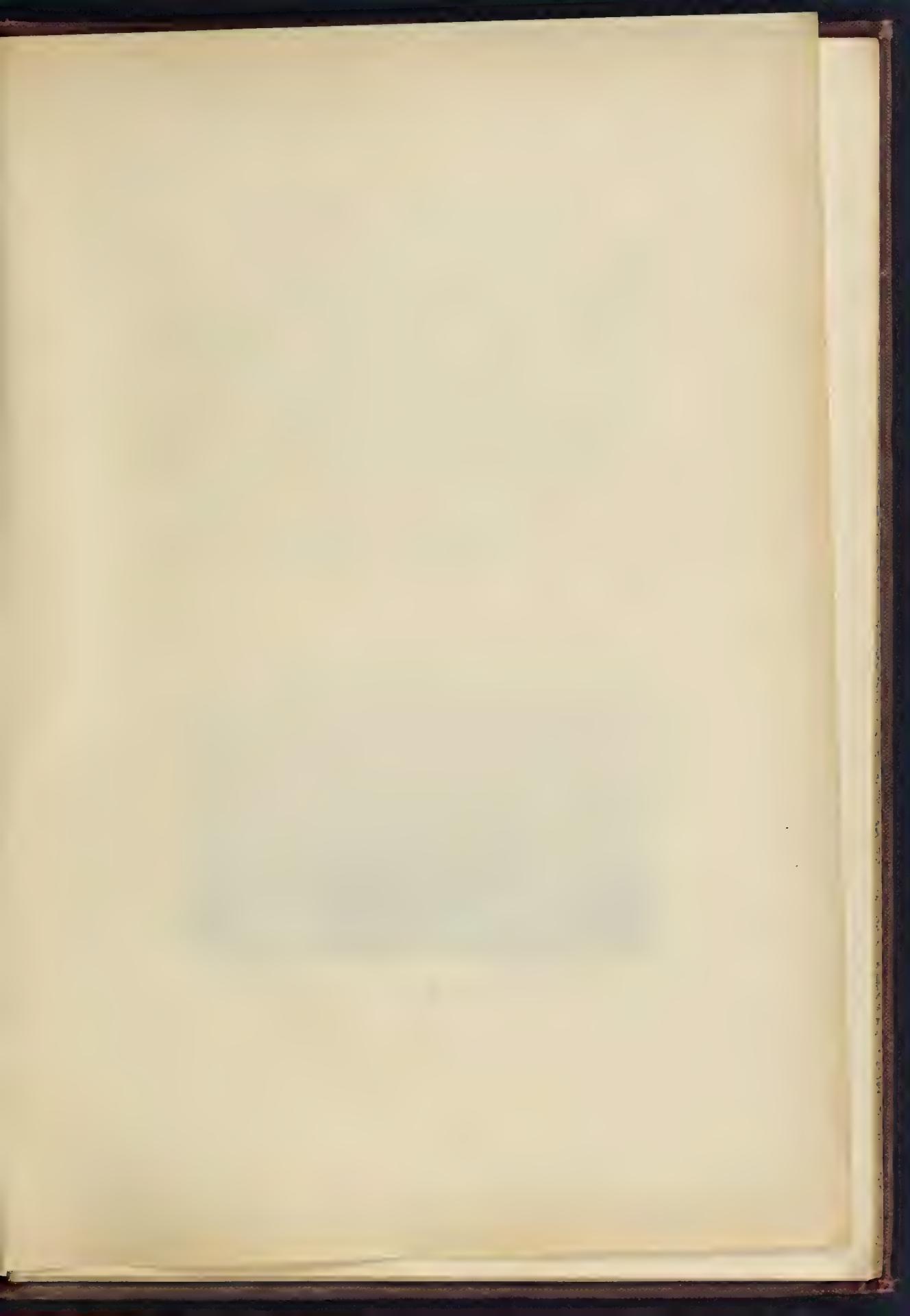
MORTLAKE TERRACE: SUMMER EVENING. Also known as
BARNES TERRACE.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

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In the Collection of
MRS. ASHTON.





THE DAY AFTER THE STORM.

From the Oil Painting by J. M. W. TURNER, R.A.

(12½ - 21)

In the Collection of
S. G. HOLLAND, Esq.

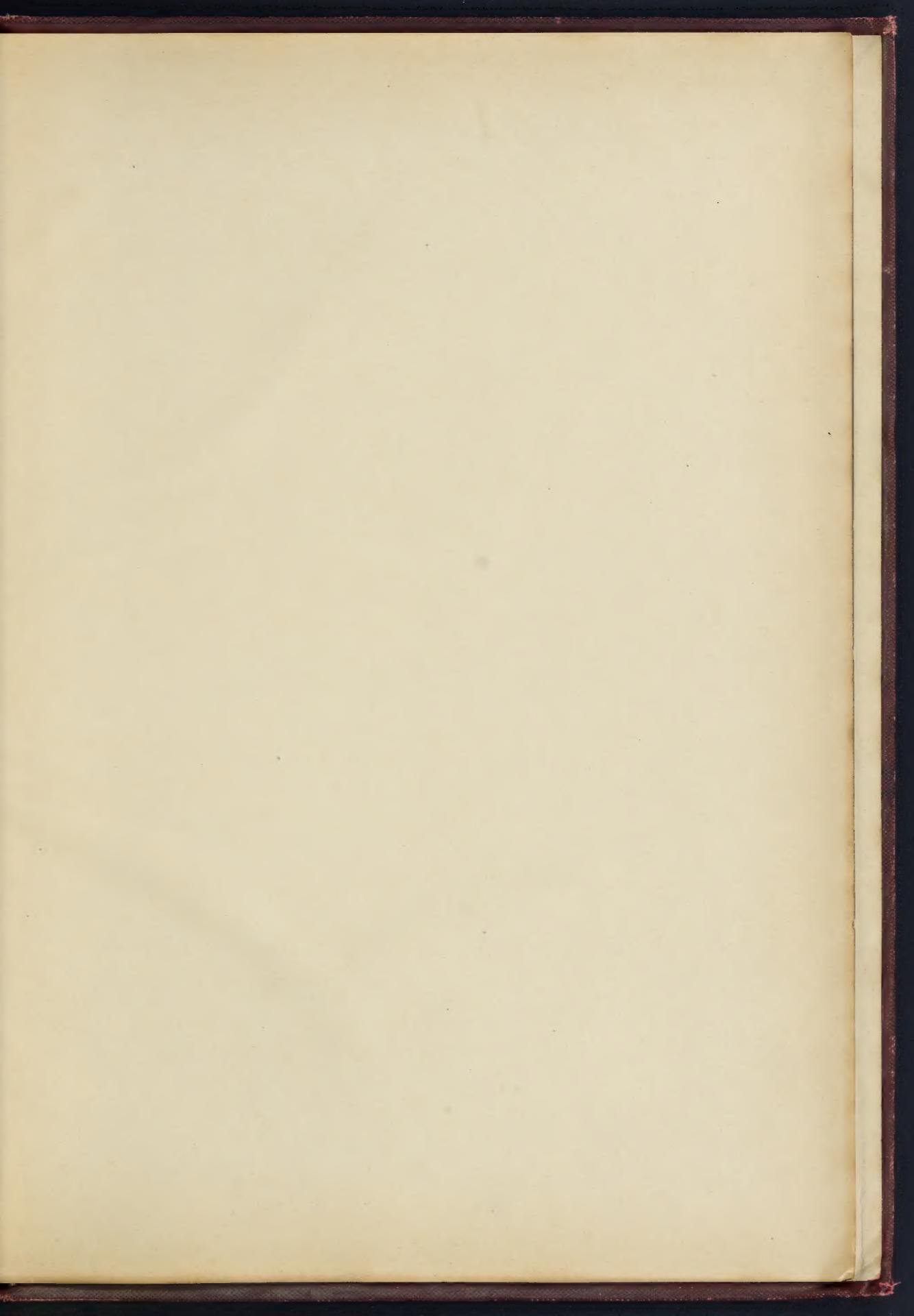
HIS LAST TRANSITION

of 1836; "Apollo and Daphne," "Hero and Leander," "Grand Canal" (T. Brocklebank, Esq.), and "Regulus," of 1837; "Phryne," "Modern Italy," and "Ancient Italy," of 1838; "Téméraire,"* "Modern Rome: the Campo Vaccino,"† "Agrippina Landing with the Ashes of Germanicus," and "Proserpine," of 1839; "Bacchus and Ariadne," "Venice: La Giudecca,"* "Slave Ship," and "Rockets and Blue Lights,"* of 1840. The list is surprising. And yet I think it shows clearly the drift towards unity, the satisfaction with one moment, one note of Nature, and one technical scheme, which was to be the characteristic of the master's last years of unimpaired efficiency.

* See Plates.

† This picture is the true pendant to the "Agrippina." It has sometimes been confused (e.g. by C. F. Bell, "Exhibited Works of J. M. W. Turner," pp. 130 and 137) with "Rome from the Aventine," which also belongs to Lord Rosebery.





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